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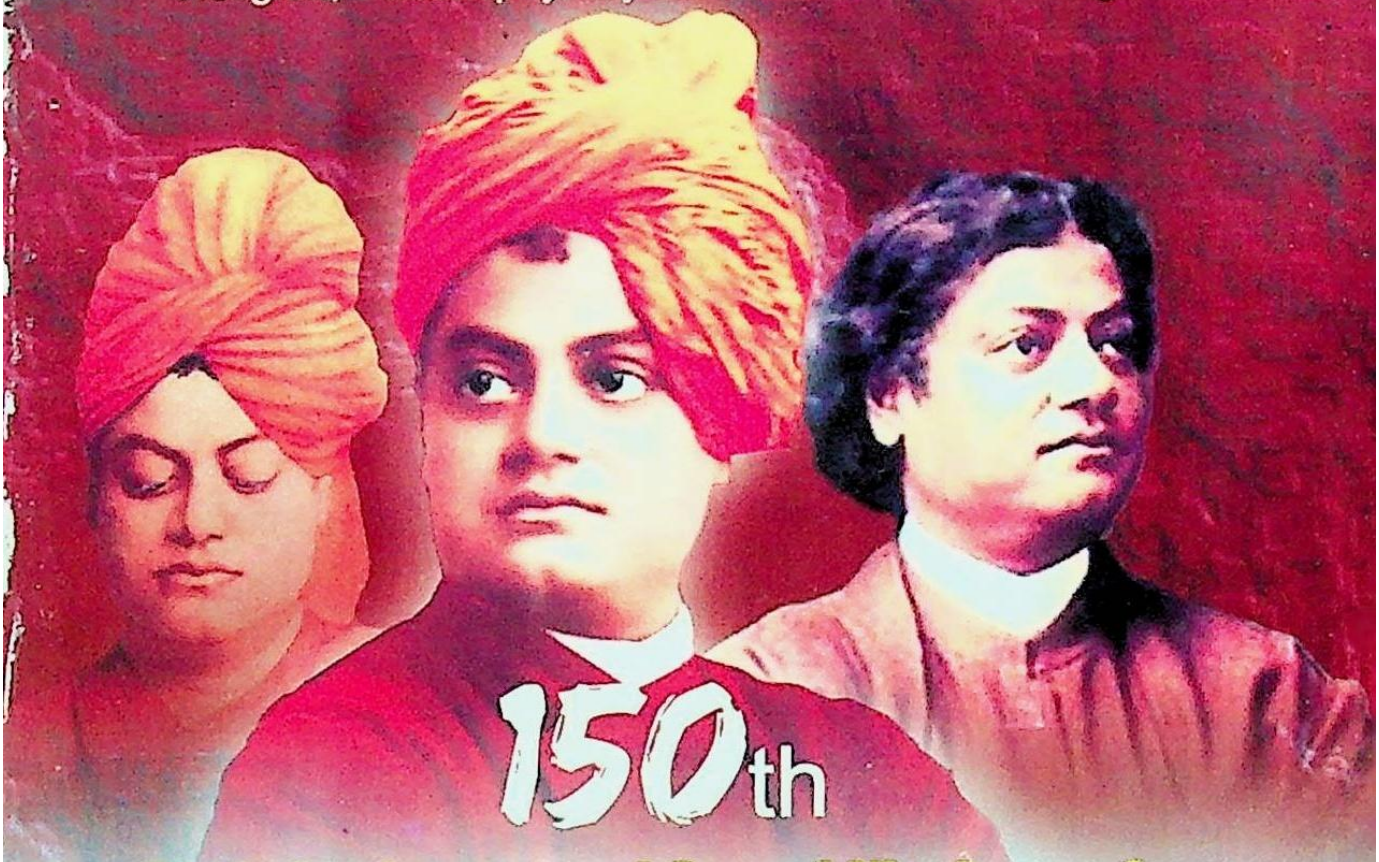

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UNIVERSAL FRAGRANCE

Each age, it has been said, exibits its own particular virtue. The Greeks, for example, regarded measure, order or Harmony as their Chief virtue. The Christians regarded charity as supreme, the middle ages insisted upon chivalry as the greatest virtue. When we come to the 18th century, we find that the virtue of age is the virtue of Benevolence. In the 19th century stress was laid on Equity.... Finally coming to modern period Sidgwick, in his distinctive doctrine of philosophic Institutionalism, reconciling the claims of egoism and altruism and green with his budding doctrine of self realisation... be regarded as the chief lamp posts of present-day ehical thought.

(Pathway to God in Hindi Literature, pp. 90-91)

Our empirical understanding that a subject must have its object will fail us at this spiritual height. In knowing other souls, they will only know themselves, like one lamp illuminating other lamps. They will, as if, penetrate into each other and will be so similar to each other, that only a philosophical bias and a dogmatic relativistic theory which is useful to some extent only on the empirical level, will prevent us from saying that they go to form single divine life.

(Vedas as Culmination of Indian Thought, p. 19)

Readers' Write

For Pathway to God, October-December 2012 issue :

Article on Shri Pandurang Shastri Athavale was a delightful reading. Bhakti comes with many facets. It cannot be separated from God. Ordinary man can liberate himself with the knowledge about indwelling God. Faith is his power to do the work. Karmayogi is apt title.

- Vikram Fadtare, Mumbai.

Sri Ramacharit Manas by Goswami Tulsidas is simple poetry sung by even ordinary, illiterate persons of North India. It gives them the same satisfaction that Warkaris get when they sing Dnyaneshwari. Prof. Joshi's article gives us philosophical insight the work has.

- Ram Narain Mishra, Ranchi.

Younger generation with techno-savy attitude will certainly keep in mind that fear not, God is always with you, after reading Sakhee's simple presentation.

- George Emmanuel, Kottayam.

Universalness of Srimad Bhagwadgeeta is vividly brought out by Dr. Satish Kapoor in his article Song Celestial. I would like to add that the phrase Song Celestial was first used by Swami Vivekananda during his visit to Chicago in 1893.

-Madhuvan C. R. Chittor.

Prof. Dabade has further extended his earlier works about Mystical Experiences.

-Janhavi Dev , Kothrud, Pune.

Editorial.....

In his brilliant essay 'The East and the West' Swami Vivekananda argues that just as the manifest man is but the prototype of the soul or idea within, so also every nation has a corresponding idea and this idea is what impels the universe as well as preserves it. While the Swami concedes the need among nations to learn from other nations he asserts the cultural imperative of a nation to jealously guard its specific identity. Given the then colonial context, the Swamy's mission was to discover and to present to the world what was essentially India's own. Rejecting both the colonial description of Hinduism as a form of barbarism, of orthodoxy and superstition in practice, Vivekananda was at pains to educate the blinkered West and the alienated fellow citizenry in the inherent vedantic principles which informed the rather imperfect denoting of the Sanatana as the mispronounced geographic specificity Hindu conjugated to summarily dismiss a complex way of life as Hinduism.

During his peregrinations all over the country between 1888 and 1892, Vivekananda came to acquire a direct and intimate experience of the economic and social misery of his countrymen which made him draw up a comprehensive agenda for rebuilding the nation. The two images that recur in his speeches during this phase are those of a house and a road. The house needed to be cleansed so that it could be inhabited and the road needed to be built professionally to facilitate India's onward march. These images are as yet relevant and need to be understood afresh, especially in the current climate of cynical opportunism of all political classes and the seething discontent that is slowly eroding the emotional as well as the imagined oneness of a populace that is more ancient than all other civilisations put together on earth.

What makes the Vivekananda's project of rebuilding the nation singularly important is his insistence on the native resources of renewal. He did not reject the West and its scientific and technological progress. Nor did he object to India learning a

lesson or two from the West. He was neither rabidly jingoistic nor ignorant of the windfall from cultural contact. He was a Modern! What he opposed was the Imperial design of the West and uncritical acceptance of the Western life-forms and ideas. "Whenever we learn from anything from others, we must mould it after our own fashion, always preserving in full our characteristic nationality", was his position. In this sense the two projects of Vivekananda projection of cultural identity and the process of self-scrutiny complemented one another. He was in all its true sense an intellectual- call it Classical, Renaissance, or Modern.

Today even as we are observing the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, the project he initiated remains incomplete. What is more threatening is that the masks of imperial conquest today are almost oblique and unidentifiable. Also the tradition and modernity debate in which Vivekananda made an intelligent intervention continues to haunt us. Swamiji's birth anniversary is the propitious occasion to rediscover and reinterpret his formulations. The following essays try to do just that.

This tribute is unique in the sense that somewhere along the road the academic world in India has not spent as much energy as it has on revaluing Tagore, Aurobindo and Paramahamsa.

Gurudev R. D. Ranade, the founder of the Academy of comparative Philosophy and Religion was a great admirer of Swamy Vivekananda and evidently the Swamy was an important influence on Gurudev. 'Pathway to God' thought of paying its tribute to the Guru of Gurudev by bringing out a special number on the occasion of his 150th birth anniversary. I thank all the contributors for their valuable articles and the Board of Trustees of Gurudev Mandir for their support.

Representing Swami Vivekananda

Makarand R. Paranjape*

Introduction

A dramatic moment in Swami Vivekananda's life, and indeed in the story of the Indo-Western encounter in modern times, was on 11 September 1893, when Vivekananda first addressed the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago. This is how he described it in a letter to his disciple in Madras, Alasinga Perumal:

There was a grand procession, and we were all marshalled on to the platform. Imagine a hall below and a huge gallery above, packed with six or seven thousand men and women representing the best culture of the country, and on the platform learned men of all the nations of the earth. And I, who never spoke in public in my life, to address this august assemblage!! It was opened in great form with music and ceremony and speeches; then the delegates were introduced one by one, and they stepped up and spoke. Of course my heart was fluttering, and my tongue nearly dried up; I was so nervous and could not venture to speak in the morning. Mazoomdar made a nice speech, Chakravarti a nicer one, and they were much applauded. They were all prepared and came with ready-made speeches. I was a fool and had none, but bowed down to Devi Sarasvati and stepped up, and Dr. Barrows introduced me. I made a short speech. I addressed the assembly as "Sisters and Brothers of America," a deafening applause of two minutes followed, and then I proceeded; and when it was finished, I sat down, almost exhausted with emotion. The

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A prolific writer and thinker of international repute.

next day all the papers announced that my speech was the hit of the day, and I became known to the whole of America. Truly has it been said by the great commentator Shridhara — "mukam karoti vachalam — Who maketh the dumb a fluent speaker." His name be praised! From that day I became a celebrity, and the day I read my paper on Hinduism, the hall was packed as it had never been before. I quote to you from one of the papers: "Ladies, ladies, ladies packing every place — filling every corner, they patiently waited and waited while the papers that separated them from Vivekananda were read", etc. You would be astonished if I sent over to you the newspaper cuttings, but you already know that I am a hater of celebrity. Suffice it to say, that whenever I went on the platform, a deafening applause would be raised for me. Nearly all the papers paid high tributes to me, and even the most bigoted had to admit that "This man with his handsome face and magnetic presence and wonderful oratory is the most prominent figure in the Parliament", etc., etc. Sufficient for you to know that never before did an Oriental make such an impression on American society. (Vivekananda 2003, Vol 5, 20-21)

The accuracy of description has been disputed by some (see Chattopadhyaya 1999), but the immense significance of Vivekananda's sojourn in the West cannot be denied. It not only created the groundwork for the reception of Indian spiritual traditions in the West but also, on Vivekananda's return to India as a victorious champion, the preconditions for a revitalized national culture.

The transformation of Vivekananda from an unknown monk to India's first national hero is described quite effectively by B. G. Gokhale in a perceptive paper called "Swami Vivekananda and Indian Nationalism" published almost sixty years back: In 1892 he was a little known sannyasi when Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the "Father of Indian Unrest," met him on a Poona-bound train. Five years later he was hailed all over the country as a

conquering hero. He "thundered from Cape Comorin on the southern tip of India to the Himalayas" delivering his message of nationalism which "came as a tonic to the depressed and demoralized Hindu mind." For five years he played the role of an itinerant prophet of a renascent India that had discovered its lost soul and was getting ready not only to recapture its past glories but also to save the world. Admiring audiences avidly heard all he had to say and seemed to welcome eagerly his message, which became the basis of a revitalized Hinduism. (Gokhale 1964, 35).

Vivekananda played a remarkable role in the emergence of a national culture that we have been exploring. While there were many competing versions of this, ranging from Christian, Muslim, Dalit, to Marxist articulations, the national consensus seemed to evolve out of a plural and non-exclusive Hindu strand of which Vivekananda was a key thought leader. I intend to raise two issues in this paper on one of modern India's most charismatic and influential prodigies.[1] The first has to do with how Vivekananda has been represented in the secondary literature on him. The second which, in a sense, arises out of the first, has to do with what constitutes a "fact" in a spiritual biography. I believe that confronting both these issues is necessary in order to have a clearer comprehension of the impact of Vivekananda on his world, both in the East and the West, but also on the larger project of fashioning a usable past

[1] An earlier version of a part of this paper was presented at the seminar on "Swami Vivekananda's Impact on the West" held at the Center for Indic Studies at the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth, on 27-28 July 2004. Portions of this paper have been used in my Introduction to the *Penguin Swami Vivekananda Reader* (2005), *The Cyclonic Swami: Vivekananda in the West* (2005), and in *Making India: Colonialism, National Culture, and the Afterlife of Indian English Authority* (2012).

which is the chief preoccupation of this book. In order to examine the kinds of issues involved, a retelling of Vivekananda's life, as a contrasting allegory to Madhusudan's may be desirable. If nothing else, it will show just how extraordinary its trajectory was. But, perhaps, more importantly, such a review will also demonstrate why the issues I intend to raise are meaningful and significant.

The Life

Swami Vivekananda was born in Calcutta on 12 January 1863, the eldest son of Bhuvaneswari Devi and Viswanath Datta. His mother named him Vireswara after the deity Vireshwara Shiva, to whom she had offered prayers for a son. The family, however, called him Narendranath or Naren for short. His father was an attorney in the Calcutta High Court. Viswanath was a successful lawyer and enjoyed an affluent lifestyle. He appreciated good food, poetry, and travel. Well-versed in both Western and Indo-Muslim culture, he was known to recite from the Bible and from the Persian poet Hafiz. A modernist by temperament, his agnosticism and liberalism placed him in opposition to many of the social conventions of his times. He was also large-hearted and generous, supporting a large number of idle, even shiftless relatives. As was often the case in nineteenth-century Bengal, while the father was a liberal, the mother was a religious and orthodox Hindu. Especially attached to the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, she was known for her piety, dignity, and compassion. After Narendra, she had two other sons; of her four daughters, two died young.

In this section, I closely follow *Vivekananda—A Biography* by Swami Nikhilananda, which in turn relies heavily on the more extensive *Life* by the Eastern and Western disciples.Quotations attributed to Vivekananda or his interlocutors are paraphrased or derived from Nikhilananda. The date of birth is disputed, but 12 January 1863 is now the most accepted date, coinciding with the auspicious Hindu festival of Makarasankranti that year.

As a child, Naren was boisterous, even naughty. He was also generous to wandering monks and holy men who came to the door of the Datta household. Initially, he was sent to school for a short while, then educated at home. He learned quickly and had a very good memory. He soon mastered the Bengali alphabet, learned long passages from the Ramayana and Mahabharata by heart, even crammed the whole text of a Sanskrit grammar. He also showed a logical and independent mind, capable at times of defying authority and conventions. As a boy who was growing up, he once asked his father, "How shall I conduct myself in the world?" His father replied, "Never show surprise at anything"—advice that Naren took to heart. At the age of eight, he entered Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar's famous school, the Metropolitan Institution. He studied English, which after some initial resistance, he excelled in. He showed a restless and energetic temperament, taking interest in a variety of things including theatre, football, gymnastics, fencing, rowing, wrestling, and cooking. He also showed a talent for singing. He was a candid and courageous boy, a natural leader. He was known to say, "Do not believe a thing because someone says so; find out the truth for yourself." As an adolescent he took to reading voraciously and also began to smoke.

In 1879, at the age of sixteen, he joined Presidency College, the premier institution of modern learning in Bengal. After a year, however, he transferred to the General Assembly's Institution, later known as Scottish Church College. According to some biographers, it was from the Principal of this college, Mr. Hastie that he first heard of Sri Ramakrishna. Apparently, Hastie told Naren that the experiences that Wordsworth had writing about in "The Excursion" could be actually seen in Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar.

Naren, like many other Anglicised Hindus of his time, became attracted to the Brahmo Samaj, a reformist sect started by Raja Rammohun Roy. He joined Keshub Chandra Sen's Band of Hope. The Brahmo version of Hinduism was shorn of what were considered its superstitions and errors, including idol worship, the subjugation of women, and several forms of caste hierarchy. Naren, however, showed his critical temperament even as a Brahmo liberal. It is said that he once asked Devendranath Tagore, who was then leader of one of the two main factions of the Brahmo Samaj, "Sir, have you seen God?" He did not receive a direct reply but was advised to practice meditation. Later, Naren put the same question to Sri Ramakrishna. To his surprise, the latter replied, "Yes, I see him as clearly as I see you, only in a much more intense way."

In November 1881, Ramachandra Datta, one of Naren's relatives and a devotee of Ramakrishna, took Naren to see the Master at the house of Surendranath Mitra. Impressed by his singing, Ramakrishna invited Naren to visit him at Dakshineswar. On his very first visit, Naren felt the strange and irresistible power of Ramakrishna's love for him. With tears streaming down his face, Ramakrishna told him, "What took you so long to come? How unkind of you to keep me waiting so long!" Naren was naturally surprised, even a little dismayed by this unexpected display of emotion and affection. Ramakrishna fed him sweets with his own hand, making him promise that he would visit again. Before he left, Naren asked Ramakrishna whether he (Ramakrishna) had seen God and was thrilled to receive an affirmative reply. Ramakrishna said, "Yes, I have. I see Him as clearly as I see you, only in a much intenser sense." Later, the master told him, "God can be seen, but who cares to see him? People shed torrents of tears for their wives and progeny, over their wealth and property, but who weeps for a vision of God? If you cry sincerely for God, you can surely see him."

During his next visit, Ramakrishna placed his foot on his body. Naren's senses swooned and he found the whole world, including himself, vanishing. He thought he was dying and cried out, "Sir, what are you doing to me? I have parents, brothers, and sisters at home." Restoring him to his "normal" consciousness, the master laughed, "All right, everything will happen in due time." Though astonished and moved, Naren persisted with his scepticism. He wondered whether he had been hypnotised or if he had hallucinated. However, his positivist bent of mind had to yield before the higher states of consciousness that Ramakrishna induced in him. On his third visit, Ramakrishna touched him again and Naren completely lost consciousness. Ramakrishna bestowed special favours on Vivekananda because he saw the latter as a very highly evolved sage, descended to the earth for the welfare of humanity.

Narendra's sharp and fiercely independent mind took several years to accept Ramakrishna as his guru. In fact, it is hard to pinpoint the exact date when he accepted Ramakrishna completely. Initially Narendra did not refrain even from criticising the object of Ramakrishna's devotion, the Divine Mother, enshrined in the Dakshineshwar temple as Kali. Yet, over the years, repeatedly, the young man's reasoning was unable to comprehend the mysteries of life or solve life's problems. It was only the guru's unwavering love and grace that gave him peace. Ramakrishna's own enthusiasm and love for Narendra was as constant as it was intense. As far as he was concerned, Narendra was his from the moment he set eyes on the latter. Vivekananda later remarked, "What do worldly people know of love? The master alone loved us genuinely."

When Narendra first met Ramakrishna he believed in the Brahmo doctrine of monotheism. The worship of several gods and goddesses, including Kali, was therefore unattractive to him. Even Advaitic ideas of the identity of the Self with the

Divine were difficult to accept. Being a positivist, he would say, "What can be more absurd that to say that this cup is God, this jug is God, and we are God too?" It was only when Ramakrishna actually gave him the superconscious state of Samadhi that Narendra began to accept a realm of awareness that was supra-sensual. The senses, he began actually to experience under Ramakrishna's tutelage, were not the only sources of knowledge. He was forced to accept that there were not only many levels of consciousness, but that the whole universe was permeated with Brahman or Spirit, indeed, that matter was full of consciousness too.

Narendra's inner struggle to reach a truth more satisfying that what he had learned by reading Locke, Hume, Spencer, and Mill was accompanied by an outer struggle for survival. What attracted him to Ramakrishna was that the latter seem to speak and act from an almost limitless source of anubhav, the actual experience of the ultimate reality, while the others, as confused and uncertain as he himself was, only seemed to spout second-hand and bookish knowledge. Ramakrishna did not force him to give up or change his beliefs, but instead only directed him to the higher truths behind appearances. For instance he said, "Even if you do not believe in images and forms, you can at least believe in an Ultimate Reality, who is the regulator of this universe." He taught Narendra how even to turn his scepticism to spiritual benefit by praying: "O God, I do not know you. Be gracious to reveal to me your real nature."

In 1884 about four years after he met Ramakrishna, just when he was to appear for his B.A. final examination, Narendra's father suddenly died. Given the nature of the Hindu joint family then, this was nothing short of a great calamity. Generous to a fault, Viswanath had lived beyond his means and died leaving accumulated debts. Creditors stalked the Datta

household. Narendra, as the eldest son, faced the brunt of this downturn of fortune. The sole breadwinner gone, the relatives immediately fell to litigation over what was left. The very relatives whom Viswanath had offered refuge to, now tried to grab what was left of his property. Bhuvaneswari Devi was left a widow, her children reduced to terrible penury. Narendra's erstwhile friends deserted him. Though he was starving, they did not even invite him to a meal. He wore out the soles of his shoes walking the streets of Calcutta, searching for any gainful and honest job. Everywhere, he faced rejection and disappointment. The cruelty and reality of the world were starkly revealed to him.

Dejected and grief-stricken, he thought that all was lost. He had begun to doubt the beneficence of providence and even the existence of God. Even in these worst of times, however, he was absorbed by the intellectual problem of a sovereign and merciful God presiding over a creation filled with evil and suffering. His biographers record how, one evening, totally drenched in the rain, tired and hungry, sitting on the pavement, he had a vision in which he understood how to reconcile a compassionate God with the misery in creation.

Ramakrishna, by his own mysterious process, apparently knew the truth of Narendra's circumstances and also the latter's troubled state of mind. Narendra got a temporary job, which was sufficient barely to support his family for the time being. When he visited Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar, he requested the holy man to ask Goddess Kali to relieve his (Narendra's) distress. Ramakrishna asked him to go into the temple and ask for whatever he wanted: "She is the sovereign of the universe and can fulfil all your wishes." At nine in the evening, Narendra went to the temple. In a state of and worldly success, all that he asked for was wisdom and discrimination. Feeling a great peace within, he returned to

Ramakrishna, only to realize that he had forgotten to ask for ecstasy, he entered the courtyard. He too was sure that whatever he asked would be granted. But instead of wealth pecuniary benefits. Ramakrishna sent him to Mother Kali again, and yet again, but in the presence of the deity his earlier resolve to beg for material riches vanished. He realized that perhaps, this whole drama had been enacted at his guru's behest only to strengthen his resolve to renounce worldly life. This was a turning point in Narendra's life. Later, Vivekananda would turn into an ardent devotee of Kali, the very goddess whose worship he scoffed as a young man.

Ramakrishna trained Vivekananda for the higher life for over five years. He lavished special attention and care on Naren's development, as if the latter were marked for a special destiny. Through ecstatic song and dance, through homely proverbs and stories, through careful observation and practice, through chanting and meditation, and through a variety of other methods, Ramakrishna prepared Vivekananda. But the real chord that tied master and disciple was the unique, elevating, unworldly love of the former, a love that was truly spiritual and transforming. From Ramakrishna he learnt the ideal of renunciation, while the privations at home softened his heart for the poor and the downtrodden. In Ramakrishna, Narendra saw the embodiment of the spirit of religion. He saw how his master had transcended all barriers, whether of caste and creed, status or gender. The master's formula, that all religions and sects are different and equally valid paths to the same Ultimate Reality made Narendra reject narrow-mindedness and fanaticism. Ramakrishna, in turn, thought very highly of Naren. Several of his remarks attest to this: "Narendra belongs to a very high plane — the realm of the Absolute. He has a manly nature. So many devotees come here, but there is no one like him"; "Every now and then I take stock of the devotees. I find that some are like lotuses with ten petals, some like lotuses

with a hundred petals. But among lotuses Narendra is a thousand-petalled one"; "Other devotees may be like pots or pitchers; but Narendra is a huge water-barrel"; "Others may be like pools or tanks; but Narendra is a huge reservoir like the Haldarpukur"; and so on.

Towards the middle of 1885, however, the great play of the master's life seemed to be drawing towards its last act. Ramakrishna had a throat ailment, which was later diagnosed as cancerous. His householder devotees shifted him to a large and comfortable garden house, the Kashipur Udyan Badi on the outskirts of Calcutta.

Ramakrishna now began to train his young boys, many of whom were looking after him, in great earnest. A band of twelve young men, all of whom renounced worldly life and became monks, attained a very high degree of spiritual proficiency under his guidance. Of them, Narendra was the leader.

During his master's illness, Narendra's longing for a concrete realization of the Divine reached its peak. He would meditate for hours, totally oblivious to the swarms of mosquitoes hovering about. He stayed up nights crying out to God. Ramakrishna considered it the right time to initiate Narendra and the other disciples into sannyasa (renunciation), thus laying the foundations of the monastic order that Vivekananda established later. All those around Ramakrishna realized his greatness seeing him bathed in inner joy and calm though his body was wasting away. Narendra asked Ramakrishna to pray to the Divine Mother about his illness. Ramakrishna said that he told Her that he could hardly swallow any food, but She replied, pointing to those around him, "Aren't you eating through so many mouths?" The master repeatedly said that God alone had become the men, animals, gardens,

houses, roads, and so on—"the executioner, the victim, and the slaughter-post" were all nothing but God himself.

Narendra found in Ramakrishna a living proof and demonstration of the truth of the scriptures. Consciousness was all pervasive; the body was transient; the spirit was deathless. Ramakrishna, who constantly told his followers that all of spiritual practice lay in the renunciation of kamanikanchana or "women [or men] and gold," that is lust and greed, sex and money, instilled the high ideals of self-sacrifice and renunciation into his young disciples. Narendra directly asked the master who he was and Ramakrishna replied, "He who was Rama and Krishna is verily this (Ramakrishna)," thus proclaiming his identity with the Divine.

The Kashipur garden house where the master spent his last days became the crucible of the Ramakrishna movement. The master passed on his powers to his beloved disciple, whispering, "Now I have given you all I possess. I am a penniless beggar, a fakir." He assured Vivekananda, "You will accomplish great things in the world. Your very bones will teach." On 15 August 1886, Ramakrishna called Narendra to his bedside, speaking to him for the last time. A few minutes past 1:00 A.M. on 16 August, he gave up his body. He was cremated on the banks of the Ganga nearby.

A new phase in Narendra's life began after Ramakrishna's death. The young disciples of Ramakrishna were now left orphaned, so to speak. The householder disciples who had supported Ramakrishna and the boys, now showed a reluctance to continue to do so. Money, even food, was scarce. Surendranath Mitra, one of the master's disciples, stepped forward to help at this crucial juncture. He paid what to the impecunious boys was the "princely" rent of Rs. 10 per month for a dilapidated house in Baranagore. The young disciples began to live there, practicing spiritual austerities. On a short visit to

Antapur, all the young men, at Vivekananda's urging, took the sacred vows of sannyas or renunciation, before a sacred fire. Standing before the dhuni (flame), Vivekananda urged them to become "Christs," to realize God and to serve their fellow humans. It turned out that the day was 24th December, Christmas Eve. Baranagore now became a monastery. There was a shrine room in the house, containing the sacred ashes of the master, to whom daily worship was offered. A monastic life, consisting of hard work, meditation, worship, study, and devotional music began to flower here. From 1886-1892, Baranagore became the first home of the Ramakrishna Order. It was during this period that Rakhal became Brahmananda, Yogin Yogananda, Baburam Premanada, Niranjan Niranjananda, Sasi Ramakrishnananda, Hari Turiyananda, Latu Adbhutananda, Sarad Trigunatitananda, Tarak Sivananda, Kali Abhedananda, Gopal Senior Advaitananda, Subodh Subodhandna, Tulsi Nirmalananda, and Hari Prasanna Vijnananda. These became the apostles of Ramakrishna, while Vivekananda was their leader.

There was, however, a yearning among many of these young men to assume the life of wandering ascetics. In 1888, trusting only in the Supreme Power, Narendra set out into the vast and as yet unknown continent of India, as a wandering holy man. Over the next three years, he took various names, among them Vividhisananda and Satchidananda. Ultimately, however, it was the Maharaja of Khetri, one of his patrons, who persuaded him to assume the name Vivekananda, which was much easier to pronounce. The name means one who delights in discrimiration; it was apt to the logically incisive mind of Narendra.

Vivekananda wandered all over India, undertaking a course of rigorous study and self-education. He mastered Sanskrit grammar and several difficult classical texts and

spiritual traditions. He also paid his respects to several well known holy men of that time. He went first to Varanasi in 1888, the ancient city considered holiest by millions of Hindus. Returning from a temple there, he was pursued by a troop of monkeys. Thinking they may harm him, he began to run. "Face the brutes," an old sannyasin told him. When he turned around, his fear gone, he found that the monkeys retreated.

On his second visit to Varanasi in the following year, he discussed the scriptures with Pramadadas Mitra, a great Sanskrit scholar. He also visited Ayodhya, celebrated in the Ramayana as the birthplace and capital of Rama's kingdom. He went to Lucknow, Agra, Vrindavan, then farther up to Hardwar. On the way, at Hathras, he initiated his first disciple, Sarat Chandra Gupta, who was the station master. At Rishikesh, both Sarat and Vivekananda contracted malaria. Leaving Sarat behind in Hathras, Vivekananda returned to Baranagore. In 1889, Vivekananda set out again, visiting Allahabad first. In January 1890 he met the famous fasting saint of Ghazipur, Pavhari Baba. It was said that the Baba lived only on air—"pavahari" literary means "air-eater." Vivekananda, who had many doubts at this time, wanted them clarified by Pavahari Baba. He even considered being initiated by the latter, but a vision of Ramakrishna dissuaded him from going ahead. His faith in Ramakrishna restored, Vivekananda left Ghazipur.

Vivekananda spent two restless years in further wanderings. The financial condition of the fledgling math at Baranagore was precarious; Vivekananda felt that he had not only to attain the knowledge which his calling as a monk demanded, but also raise the means to make the Order viable. He visited Bhagalpur, Benaras, Ayodhya, Naini Tal, Almora, Badarikashrama, Karnaprayag, Kedarnath, Srinagar, Tehri, Mussoorie, Dehra Dun, Saharanpur, and Allabhabad. In 1891 he visited Rajasthan, stopping earlier in Delhi. In Rajasthan he

visited Alwar, Ajmer, Jaipur, Mt. Abu, before travelling South to Kathiawar and Gujarat. There he visited Ahmedabad, Junagadh, Porbandar, and Baroda, before moving to Central India. He visited Khandwa, then went farther south to Bombay, Pune, Kolhapur Belgaum, Bangalore, Mysore, and then to Malabar and Travancore, and finally to the very tip of India, Kanyakumari. Then he travelled North East to Tamil Nadu, stopping at Ramnad, Pondicherry, Madras, Hyderabad,

During these travels, Vivekananda met a variety of Indians from various social strata, religions, and castes. He rubbed shoulders with princes and potentates, with pandits and prime ministers. But he also met the common people, the toilers and the tillers, the humble folk of the land, who were reduced to poverty and wretchedness. He understood many of the ills that plagued our land, including the immense inequality and oppression. Yet, behind all the sorrow and trauma of this land, now under foreign yoke, he felt the strong throb of its soul. Though assailed by many superstitions and enveloped in ignorance, the people of India, he saw, were still simple, straightforward, and God-fearing. He felt that he must do something for them.

A turning point in these travels was his meditation at the last bit of Indian rock on which the Kannyakumari temple was situated. He felt a vision of a new India rising before his mind's eye and he felt destined to bring it to reality. He also realized that it was not the princes and the ruling classes who would bring about this new India but the common people, who needed most to be transformed and inspired. That is why when he went to Madras from Kannyakumari he gathered around him a devoted group of young men to work for the cause of new India.

Somewhere along these travels, he had also formed the

intention of going to the Parliament of Religions to be held in Chicago in 1893. In Madras he announced his intentions of doing so. His devotees, especially a band of young men led by Alasinga Perumal of Madras, began to collect funds for this trip. Later, he got more help from the Raja of Khetri. He saw a vision in which he was walking on water and also received the permission from Sarada Ma, Ramakrishna's consort, to go West with the master's message.

On 31 May 1893, Vivekananda set sail for the U.S. It would be a long voyage, taking him through Colombo, Penang, Singapore, Hong Kong, Osaka, Kyoto, Tokyo, to Yokohama, and thence, crossing the Pacific ocean, to Vancouver in British Columbia, Canada. From there he travelled to Chicago, the venue of the Columban Exposition and the World Pariament of Religions. During this trip, Vivekananda wrote letters home describing his experiences and observations of the various countries and peoples that he had encountered.

The story of Vivekananda's participation in the Parliament of Religions is the stuff of which legends are made. In the West for the first time, in a totally different culture, he found himself practically penniless and friendless, without even an invitation to the Parliament or a letter of introduction. When he visited the Columban Exposition, of which the Parliament was a part, he was both bewildered and impressed by the immense material and technological progress of the West. How far behind was India! It was the end of July 1893; he found out that the Parliament had been postponed until September. In his strange clothes, he was teased and stared at. Hotels in Chicago were very expensive; the cheaper ones often mistook him for a "negro" and denied him lodgings. He soon ran through his meagre means. He was tired and depressed, wondering whether he would have to beat an ignominious retreat. He was advised that it was cheaper to live in Boston. Enroute, in

the train, his regal bearing and strange appearance attracted the curiosity of a wealthy lady, Miss Kate Sanborn. She invited Vivekananda to "Breezy Meadows," her home in Boston.

As Miss Sanborn's guest, he met many people in and around Boston. For most of them, he was an item of curiosity, the first Easterner and "Hindu" they had ever met. The image of India that these people had was a very unflattering one, derived mostly from the Christian missionaries. Vivekananda realized that one of his primary responsibilities would be to show a different India to the West, one that actually had something to offer to the modern world. In Boston, he also met Professor J. H. Wright of Harvard University, who agreed to write a letter of introduction to the Parliament so that Vivekananda could be a delegate. Professor Wright even bought him a train ticket to Chicago.

The train to Chicago arrived late in the evening. Vivekananda had misplaced some of the addresses of the committee members in charge of the delegates. He spent the night in a freight wagon in the rail yard. The next morning, he walked towards the Lake Shore Drive, asking his way to the Parliament. Hungry, he asked for food, as an Indian sannyasi is wont to, at the doors of the wealthy mansions lining the street. Because he was unshaven and wore soiled clothes, he was thought to be a vagabond, and he was rudely turned away. Finally, tired and famished, he sat on the sidewalk. A kindly lady who saw him from the window of her house and knew him to be a delegate at the Parliament, sent for him. She was Mrs. George W. Hale, who not only gave him succour and shelter, but presented him to Dr. J. H. Barrows, the President of the Parliament. Vivekananda, once again, had proof that providence was watching over him. The Hales became Swamiji's staunch devotees.

The World's Parliament of Religions, which was inaugurated

on 11 September 1893, was a grant event. Part of the Columban Exposition to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America, the Parliament was perhaps meant to show the West's supremacy in matters of religion and spirit as the Exposition was meant to demonstrate the West's material and technological superiority. Yet, this was an unprecedented opportunity for people of various faiths and cultures to talk to each other. There were many delegates not only for all over the world, but also from the Indian subcontinent. Not just Christians, but Muslims, Hindus, Brahmos, Theosophists, Buddhists, Jains, and Parsis were represented.

Vivekananda seemed unprepared and out of place in this august assembly of notables and dignitaries. Yet, when he stood up to spoke, uttering the simple greeting "Sisters and Brothers of America," it is said that he was greeted with a loud and standing applause. He continued:

It fills my heart with joy unspeakable to rise in response to the warm and cordial welcome which you have given us. I thank you in the name of the most ancient order of monks in the world. I thank you in the name of the mother of religions, and I thank you in the name of the millions and millions of Hindu people of all classes and sects. I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. I am proud to belong to a religion which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations on earth.

(Vivekananda 2003, vol 1, 3)

While the other delegates had tried to emphasize the strength and uniqueness of their own creed, Vivekananda struck a different chord. He spoke of the tolerance and universality of India's spiritual traditions. He spoke out against narrow-mindedness and fanaticism. He seemed to speak not only on behalf of Hinduism but of all faiths of the world, the only one

of the delegates to do so. Vivekananda had succeeded in conveying in a modern idiom the great teachings of his master to a totally unfamiliar Western audience. In his final address he clearly said:

The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor is a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth. If the Parliament of Religions has shown any thing to the world, it is this: It has proved to the world that holiness, purity, and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart.... (24)

Vivekananda's intervention in the Parliament may be considered prophetic not just for India's influence on the West but also for the future of dialogue between the West and the East. Though his impact in the Parliament has often been exaggerated, there is no doubt that his debut was outstanding and that he made a great impression. The New York Herald called him "Undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions," and added, "After hearing him, we feel foolish to send missionaries to this learned nation."

After the Parliament, Vivekananda became somewhat of a celebrity. A lecture bureau engaged him to tour the country. He needed the money to free himself from some of his patrons and to fund his activities in India. He toured and spoke tirelessly, subjecting himself to a punishing schedule. Later, he freed himself from the bureau because it was exploiting him. After a while, some of the Christian churches began to attack him in the newspapers, calling him a charlatan, fraud, and immoral person. Those who went back to India also carried tales.

Vivekananda faced not only slander but considerable opposition in his mission in the U.S. Yet, he never gave up and hardly ever retaliated. He also made many friends and followers.

From 1893-1896, Vivekananda travelled widely in the U.S. as a speaker and preacher. While the American Renaissance had already created a favourable climate for Indian ideas, especially in New England, it was Vivekananda who laid the foundations for Vedanta in the U.S. and then in Britain. Besides Chicago and Boston, he spoke in Iowa City, Des Moines, Memphis, Indianapolis, Minneapolis, Detroit, Buffalo, Hartford, Boston, Cambridge, New York, Baltimore, and Washington. He was a very effective speaker, but was frequently outspoken. He abhorred cant and hypocrisy and preached against them. He also experienced the social problems in the U.S. first hand: sometimes, taken for a black, he was refused admission to establishments.[1] Seeing the freedom and opportunity given especially to women in America, he was all the more outraged at the ill treatment and oppression of Indian women. Vivekananda admired material progress and science. In his letters to India, he wrote enthusiastically about several aspects of American life, especially its democratic spirit, cleanliness, order, hygiene, efficiency, and prosperity.

Towards the end of 1894, Vivekananda's work began to assume a new depth and seriousness. He had already established the Vedanta Society in New York as a non-sectarian organization devoted to Vedanata. In early 1895, he took up lodgings in New York City and began to give intensive courses on the yogas. These would later be revised into his first major publications. Raja Yoga, for example, came out in June 1895. A translation and commentary on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, it attracted the attention of William James and Leo Tolstoy.

[1] See Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* for an account of social inequity in the USA.

Exhausted with his unceasing labours, Vivekananda retired for seven weeks to Miss Dutcher's cottage at the Thousand Island Park on the St. Lawrence River. He also initiated two American disciples, Marie Louise and Leon Landsberg into sannyas, administering to them the vows of poverty and chastity. During his stay here, Vivekananda had many spiritual and mystical experiences. He also wrote some poems, taught intensely, and was at his most inspired.

In July 1895, Vivekananda sailed for Europe. He was invited by Henrietta Müller and E. T. Sturdy to England and by Francis H. Leggett to Paris. He arrived in Paris in August 1895. He wrote enthusiastic letters describing that city and his experiences there. Later, he would also learn some French. From Paris, he went to London, where he again began to work earnestly. His British reception was quieter and less critical. The British upper classes and the press liked him. He also met Margaret E. Noble, the Irishwoman, who, as Sister Nivedita, became one of his foremost disciples.

In December, Vivekananda returned to the U.S. Once again, he started lecturing intensely. The talks he gave were published as Karma-Yoga. J. J. Godwin, a professional stenographer, now joined him. To him we owe accurate transcripts of Vivekananda's subsequent lectures in the U.S., Europe, and India. In 1896, Vivekananda recommenced his lectures, speaking at the Madison Square Garden, New York city. These lectures were published as Bhakti Yoga. Thereafter, he spoke in Detroit and at Harvard University. He also reinforced the work of the Vedanta Society in New York. His aim was to rationalize and universalise the truths of the Vedanta, thereby supplying the need for a non-sectarian world practice of spirituality. A careful examination of the record shows that from 6 December 1895 to February 1896, he gave seventy classes, ten public lectures, gave interviews,

participated in initiations, wrote letters, had an extensive correspondence, and wrote and edited his own lectures (Chattopadhyaya, 1999, 40).

In May 1896, Vivekananda went again to England to meet the famous indologist, Max Müller at Oxford. He also found new disciples in Captain and Mrs. Sevier. The Seviers paid for the establishment of the Advaita Ashram at Mayavati, in the foothills of the Himalayas. Vivekananda toured the Continent in August 1896. He visited Geneva, Mer-de-Glace, Montreux, Chillon, Chamounix, St. Bernard, Lucerne, Rigi, Zermatt, and Schaffhausen. He loved the Alps and even wanted to climb Mont Blanc. He then met Paul Deussen, Professor of Philosophy at Kiel and renowned Orientalist. With him, Vivekananda visited Heidelberg, Coblenz, Cologne, and Berlin. He also travelled to Amsterdam before returning to London. In December 1896, he travelled overland through Dover, Calais, Mont Cenis, Milan, Piza, Florence, heading to Naples, from where he set sail for India.

Vivekananda had not forgotten India during these years abroad. He was forming the plans of the Math and Mission that he would establish. His letters were filled with instructions on the daily routine of monks and plans for a bigger headquarters for the Order. He wanted everything to be organized and managed on modern, efficient lines. He wanted to create a generation of selfless men who would have the courage to serve their less fortunate Indian brothers and sisters. He asked of them the strength of a kshatriya, the warrior, and the learning and luminosity of the brahmin, the scholar. But this combination was to be transformed into a different kind of shudra dharma or work of service to the masses.

With some of these thoughts in his mind, he arrived in

January 1897 in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) via Aden. His fame had preceded him. In Colombo, a huge reception awaited him. Swami Niranjanananda had already been sent there to receive him, while Swami Sivananda waited for him in Madras. What happened in Colombo was only a foretaste of things to come. Wherever Vivekananda went, he was feted and thronged. Bands played music in his honour, priests chanted Vedic hymns, flowers were strewn in his pathways, flags were unfurled, buntings and festoons decorated the streets that walked. Huge crowds turned up to see him. He was honoured by civic receptions. The foremost citizens of the land, including princes, potentates, the landed and industrial gentry he visited, touched his feet. His carriages were drawn by enthusiastic students and devotees. He met rousing welcomes and celebrations. He was, in a sense, India's first national figure. This is because what he had succeeded in doing was nothing less than the restoration of the pride and dignity of India in the eyes of the world.

From Colombo, Vivekananda travelled to Kandy, Anuradhapuram, Jaffna, Pamban, Rameswaram, Ramnad, Paramakkudi, Madurai, Trichinapally, and Kumbakonam, before reaching Chennai. He gave several public talks in Chennai, where the adulation of the people knew no bounds. Vivekananda was seen not just as the champion for the Hindus, but of all Indians, especially of the downtrodden and underprivileged. A group of educated youth decided to dedicate their lives to furthering his cause, the cause that was no less than the uplifting of all of India, the regeneration of Bharat Mata and of the sanatana parampara (the perennial path). Vivekananda's speeches in Chennai are memorable in that they convey his deepest aspirations for India and also outline his method of achieving them. In his talks from Colombo to Chennai, Vivekananda had offered a complete vision for the revitalization and transformation of Indian society. Some these lectures are

the most inspiring and insightful utterances of Vivekananda.

Vivekananda arrived in Calcutta, his home city in February 1897. Though his reception was joyous and warm, it lacked the electrifying excitement of what was offered to him in Chennai. Calcutta, then the second city of the British Empire and the capital of India, was still very deeply entrenched in Western cultural dominance. Vivekananda paid tributes to his master, Ramakrishna and expounded on the bases of Vedanta to his fellow Calcuttans.

When his brother monks and disciples met Vivekananda on his return to India, they found him considerably altered. His vision had expanded beyond narrow notions of personal salvation. He now had much larger dreams and ideas. He had invented a new kind of spiritual activism for India and a new kind of philosophic spirituality for the West. It was only his magnetic personality and charisma that could enrol his guru-bhais or brother disciples to his way of thinking. Most of the latter wanted to "enjoy" a quiet and withdrawn spiritual life without too many hardships or conflicts. They did not think that they had renounced the world to become servants of the people or the builders of a new society. Vivekananda, on the other hand, seemed to be stirring up a revolution. He gave a new interpretation to Ramakrishna's famous words, "Religion is not for empty stomachs." He felt that the nostrum for India's decay lay in the cultivation of strength and material development. He argued that what was passed off as sattva, the quality of tranquillity and illumination, was nothing but tamas, sloth and ignorance. Thus camouflaged, cowardice and defeat pretended to be detachment and tranquillity. Personal liberation, he argued, was already guaranteed to those who had taken refuge in Ramakrishna; what they therefore had to devote themselves to was the service and upliftment of their wretched and suffering brethren. All of the latter were representatives

of God, daridra narayana (poor as God) and therefore demanded such attention.

His brother disciples, who respected him and loved him, often felt driven to obey him, even though they might disagree. At his behest, Swami Ramakrishnananda, who had faithfully looked after the master's shrine for twelve years, left for Chennai to assume charge of the work there. Swami Akhanandananada went to alleviate the sufferings of the famine-stricken in Mushirabad. Swamis Abhedananda and Saradananda were sent to the U.S. Vivekananda himself set about to initiate many young men into the Order. "Arise and awake," he exhorted, "arouse and awaken others, fulfil your mission in life, and you will reach the highest goal." He urged the well-born and privileged to give up pride of caste and class, and to devote themselves instead to the welfare of the poor and the lowly. He advised men to treat women better and women to educate themselves. To give his ideas a practical shape he formed the Ramakrishna Mission Association, with himself as its General President and Brahmananda as the President of the Calcutta centre.

From May to December 1897, Vivekananda travelled all over North India, sometimes accompanied by his brother monks, and later by the Seviers, Miss Müller, and Goodwin. He went to Lucknow, Almora, and later to Bareilly, Ambala, Amritsar, Lahore, Dharamsala, Murre, Jammu, Srinagar (Kashmir), Lahore, Delhi, Alwar, Khetri, Kishengarh, Ajmer, Jodhpur, Indore, and Khandwa, before returning to Calcutta. In Lahore, he met a Lecturer in Mathematics, Ram Tirtha Goswami, who fell under his spell, and later became the well-known saint, Swami Rama Tirtha. On these journeys, Vivekananda renewed contacts with some of his old patrons and admirers, who had befriended and hosted him during his parivrajika (wandering) days. Wherever he went, inspiring people to rebuild India was his priority. He wished to reawaken

a pride and self-respect in the ancient culture of the Hindus, without the least taint of fanaticism or intolerance. He encouraged intermarriage between castes and subcastes, and even supported the return of converts to the Hindu fold. He also advocated a new ideal for Indians, which would combine the "Vedantic brain and the Islamic body."

In 1898, Vivekananda travelled to Darjeeling, Almora, and Kashmir, where he paid his homage at the famous Amarnath shrine. The monastery was shifted from Alambazar (where it was moved in 1892 from Baranagore) to Belur, on the West bank of the Ganga. The site of the present Belur Math was also purchased, enabled by Miss Müller's generous donation. Another donation by Mrs. Ole Bull helped to complete the construction of the shrine, which was consecrated on 9 December 1898. On 2 January 1899, the monastery was shifted to Belur Math. Swami Swarupananda, who later edited the journal Prabuddha Bharata and became the first president of the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, was initiated by Vivekananda into monastic life. Vivekananda's faithful disciple and stenographer, Goodwin died. Advaita Ashrama was itself founded on 19 March 1899. The Bengali journal Udbodhan was also started in early 1899.

Margaret Noble had come to India in January 1898 and travelled with Vivekananda to Kashmir. Vivekananda called her "England's gift to India". She was initiated into celibacy and given the name "Nivedita," which means "consecrated". Nivedita was sent to work with Sarada Ma and trained in Indian culture and mores. This proved, however, to be a difficult and chequered relationship.

After his Amarnath darshan or vision of Shiva in the form of the snow linga, Vivekananda felt an intense need for solitude. His mind seemed to turn from the Vedantic Absolute to Kali, the Divine Mother whom Ramakrishna worshipped so

ardently all his life. Garlanded with human skulls, her tongue dripping with blood, and an unsheathed sword in her hand, she presents an image of terror. Standing on the chest of her prone husband, Shiva, Kali embodies the dynamic force of Godhead. She is the creative energy of the cosmos personified. Vivekananda realized that Kali is omnipotent; he was consumed by the consciousness of her presence and power. He had a vision of the Divine Mother, an apocalyptic scene of death and devastation. He wrote the poem, "Kali the Mother" after this experience. He said, "Only by the worship of the Terrible can the Terrible itself be overcome, and immortality gained. Meditate on death! Meditate on death! Worship the Terrible, the Terrible, the Terrible! And the Mother Herself is Brahman! Even Her curse is a blessing. The heart must become a cremation ground — pride, selfishness, and desire all burnt to ashes. Then, and then alone, will the Mother come."

On 30 September 1898, Vivekananda stayed alone for a week in the dilapidated temple of the Divine Mother at Kshirbhavani. Destroyed by Muslim invaders, the temple lay in ruins. Distressed, the Swami thought, "How could the people have allowed this to happen. Had I been here, I would never have permitted this; I would have laid down my life to protect the Mother." Just then he heard the voice of the Goddess: "What if infidels should enter My temple and defile My image? What is that to you? Do you protect Me, or do I protect you?" Later, he had the thought that he should raise the money to restore the temple, but once again heard the Mother say, "My child! If I so wish I can have innumerable temples and monastic centres. I can even this moment raise a seven-storied golden temple on this very spot." These extraordinary experiences convinced him that all patriotism or religious fervour belonged to a lower plane of consciousness; everything that was and everything that happened were according to the Divine will and plan. All sovereignty and agency were vested only in the Divine; the

human only seemed the doer, but was no more than a puppet. Vivekananda felt that his mission was more or less accomplished; he was free of the world, at least spiritually. "I have ceased making any more plans," he said, "Let these things be as Mother wills."

In June 1899, Vivekananda sailed a second time for the West. From Calcutta, his steamship "Golconda," went to Madras, then to Colombo, Aden, Naples, Marseilles, arriving in London at the end of July. Swami Turyananda and Nivedita had accompanied Vivekananda. Fifteen days later, they sailed for New York. Vivekananda visited the Leggetts in their country home, Ridgely Manor in the Catskill Mountains in upstate New York. Returning to New York City, he lectured there, and then went west. Stopping at Chicago, he eventually reached Los Angeles on the West Coast. In California, Vivekananda visited Oakland, San Franscisco, and Alameda. A centre was started in San Franscisco. Vivekananda received a gift of 160 acres of land near Mt. Hamilton, California. After his successful visit, he returned to the East Coast, stopping in Chicago and Detroit. Back in New York City, he gave lectures at the Vedanta Society. Later, he visited Detroit for a week.

In July 1900, he set sail for Paris to participate in the Congress of the History of Religions. Here he not only gave talks but argued with French Catholics and German Orientalists. He met J. C. Bose, the great scientist, Patrick Geddes (an academic), Pere Hyacinth (a former monk), Hiram Maxim (an inventor), Sarah Bernhardt, Jules Bois (a writer), and Emma Calve. He also visited Brittany and Mt. St. Michel. Travelling through Vienna, Hungary, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Istanbul, and Athens, he reached Cairo. Here, he and his companions mistakenly wandered into the sex district, where they were jeered and accosted. But later, the prostitutes came out into the street, knelt before Vivekananda, and kissed the hem of his

robe. This recalls an earlier episode when after an initial reaction, he returned to listen to a courtesan's song in the palace of a Rajput prince during his wandering days. From Cairo, Vivekananda took a boat to Bombay.

From Bombay, taking a train to Calcutta, Vivekananda arrived at Belur Math on 9 December 1900. Mr. Sevier had just passed away at Mayavati. On 11 December he wrote to Miss MacLeod: "Thus two great Englishmen [the other was J.J. Goodwin] gave up their lives for us — us, the Hindus. This is martyrdom, if anything is." Vivekananda himself went to Mayavati to see Mrs. Sevier. He returned to Belur Math in late January 1901. Two months later, in March 1901, he took his mother on a pilgrimage to East Bengal. The party reached Dhaka in March, where he delivered public lectures. He then went to Chandranath, Chittagong, and to Kamakhya, near Guwahati in Assam. After returning to Belur, he spent many quiet months in the monastery in his large room.

In 1902 many important visitors met Vivekananda including Okakura Tenzin from Japan. With Okakura, Vivekananda went to Varanasi and then to Bodh Gaya. In Varanasi, the Maharaja offered him a handsome donation, which was used to start the Ramakrishna Home of Service. Vivekananda's health was getting worse. He had symptoms of diabetes, which he had inherited, and of dropsy. His feet were swollen and he could hardly close his eyes to sleep. Increasingly, he began to free himself of responsibilities, concentrating more and more on meditation and prayer. Always passionate in his beliefs, he now refused even to comment on day-to-day questions. On 15 May 1902, he wrote to Miss Macleod, "A great idea of quiet has come upon me. I am going to retire for good—no more work for me."

In the last days of his life, everything he did was

unhurried, calm, and deliberate. Towards the end of June 1902, he asked for a Bengali almanac, which he studied intently. Three days before his passing, to told Premananda where he wished his body cremated. He fasted on ekadashi, the 11th day of the lunar month; on that day, he himself served Sister Nivedita her meal. On the 4 July 1902, which was a Friday, he spent many hours in meditation. He sang movingly, a devotional song to Kali, had a hearty lunch, taught Sanskrit grammar for three hours in the afternoon, had a walk with Premananda, and had a long conversation with his companions. He said, "India is immortal if she persists in her search for God. But if she goes in for politics and social conflict, she will die." At seven in the evening, he retired to his room, asking not to be disturbed. He meditated for an hour, then asked a disciple to fan him as he lay down. After another hour, his hands trembled, he breathed deeply once, and then gave up his body. It is widely believed that he chose the day and time of his own death and that it was no accident that this happened to be the American independence day.

His death left his brother monks somewhat nonplussed. They did not even have the presence of mind to take one last photograph of their dear brother and leader.

Representations

This extensive account is itself a certain kind of representation of Vivekananda's life. What are the values that have informed it? Before answering this question, it might be apposite to ask, what do we mean by "representation" in the first place? I think the word may be sued in two main senses. The most obvious and therefore the primary meaning of "represent" is to describe, to re-present something or someone. This meaning of represent, as in the Oxford English Dictionary, suggests presence or appearance because, etymologically, represent goes back to the Latin esse or presence. To re-present, then, is to describe or to offer a "likeness" of something. There is a gap between the actual

presence, and the likeness or description. A representation, therefore, cannot be totally accurate. If presence is likened to the thing-in-itself, there will always be a gap between it and its representation, between the noumenon and the phenomenon. The "likeness," furthermore, may actually be a kind of "unlikeness"; that is why, someone may exclaim that my idea of Vivekananda is quite different from theirs. But that is only to be expected because every act of description is also one of interpretation. And there are as many interpretations as there are interpreters. I think this is what Swami Tyagananda highlights when he says that "discovery is a two-track process" in which, on the one hand, "we discover places or things or people" but on the other hand, "we discover our own selves". (Tyagananda 2005, 29)

The other meaning of "represent" is to stand in for, as when we speak of the House of Representatives. So to represent Vivekananda is also to stand for (or against) him. For example, in his name, a whole range of institutions and practices are established: there are societies, centres, schools, colleges, even residential layouts and roads named after him. Of these, some are of a general sort and may not signify anything more than respect or reverence for Vivekananda, but others imply that they are the authentic owners or carriers of his legacy. It is the latter who, in effect, control the apparatus of perpetuating his memory. They are doing Swamiji's work, as it were, or claim to be doing it, which gives them these special rights over controlling what people think of him. On the other side are those who would seem to be doing not so much Swamiji's work but that of "truth," "science," or "secular knowledge." They call themselves historians, academics, intellectuals, critics, or scholars. Indeed, there is competition between these stake-holders who generate competing interpretations. There may be yet another faction, those who

those who oppose Swamiji and what he stood for; such detractors may see in him an opponent to their own agenda, whether religious or secular. Sometimes, such differences even get consolidated into schools or traditions. Again, Swami Tyagananda referred to some groups as devotees versus sceptics, those who see Vivekananda as divine as opposed to those who see him as only too human. Tyagananda asks an important question: whether it is possible to take a new look at Vivekananda, one that would not only reconcile these "schools" of representation, but actually rediscover Swamji for the present age (Tyagananda, 2005, 31). It is precisely this challenge that this paper takes up.

But for such an integrated approach to be possible, I would argue that we have to come to terms with the crux of these two meanings of the word "represent." Some critics (see Spivak 1988), referring to Karl Marx, encapsulate these two senses of the word as "portrait" and "proxy," or to go back to the German terms, darstellung and vertretung respectively. Indeed, both ways of looking at Vivekananda are relevant to my own inquiry, which is sympathetic to Tyagananda's project of taking a new look at Vivekananda. This brings me to an important gesture at self-disclosure. My immediate purpose or prasanga to study Vivekananda was to edit a new, one-volume collection of his writings for a general audience.[1] Such a project was exciting because most of the anthologies of Swamiji's work are either by disciples and devotees or by those who are the flag-bearers of his legacy. Moreover, many of these selections were for specific purposes or topics, such as Vivekananda on Women, on Education, on Hinduism, on India and her problems, on Youth and so on. To try to do a selection independently was therefore a major challenge.

[1] This was published as *The Penguin Swami Vivekananda Reader* in 2005.

But any such project of (re)discovery can only happen through the available literature by and on him. In other words, all these anthologies, including the one I worked on, must rely on the only available edition of his Complete Works published in nine volumes by the Advaita Ashrama of the Ramakrishna Math. This is because scholars or anthologists do not have access to the actual sources, but have to rely on what is available through the official publications. Let me present one example of the difficulty that this poses: the recently discovered letters of Swamiji to the Maharaja of Khetri, Ajit Singh. These letters, as we know, were found in the dusty files of the record room in Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, which was then in the princely state of Khatri. Two of these letters were first published in the Times of India of 24 February, 1999. The first is dated 15 February [1893] and talks about Vivekananda's encounter with a psychic, Govinda Chetty, an astrologer who predicts many things to Vivekananda, but also asks the latter to bless some vibhuti (holy ash) and give that to him. The letters were written without punctuation and had many other peculiarities (Chattopadhyay 1999, 433). For instance, Vivekananda calls the Maharaja, not "Your Highness" but "your 'High Up." The year is not written in the letter, but we know from other sources that it is likely to be 1893. When Prabuddha Bharata reprinted the letters, they not only "corrected" the spellings and punctuation, but they changed the ending in the second letter of 22 May [1893] from "yours obediently" to "Yours in the Lord" (ibid).

Now one might argue that such changes are minor and insignificant, but from the point of view of accuracy, they would be hard to justify. Just how much to "correct" is a major issue in textual scholarship. While spelling may be modernised and punctuation inserted or standardised, even such minimally invasive sorts of alterations will change the flavour and savour of a text. We may never, for instance, know if Vivekananda was a good speller or whether his English "improved" with the

years! There is a bigger epistemological issue at stake here, but I will come to them later. Right now we need to remember that it is possible that there are many other existing errors and erroneous emendations in the Complete Works. Besides changes, there are also several omissions and deletions. I discovered these many years ago when I wrote a paper on Vivekananda's letters. There are curious paradoxes in what the editors and publishers of these letters did to them. For instance, in one letter, Vivekananda says to the addressee: destroy this letter after you've read it or don't show this letter to anyone. The letter is published with these words in it! This is an example of a certain kind of fidelity to the actual text of the letter even if it means a deliberate or inadvertent disobedience of the Swami's command. But there are innumerable instances in the published letters where ellipses suggest the omission of text. I was given to understand that matters of a private, controversial, or otherwise inappropriate nature were omitted because they were not considered suitable to general readers. Who took these decisions and for what reasons remains to be investigated. Unlike Jeffrey J. Kripal[1] I am not at all suggesting that there is a secret in the deleted portions waiting to be discovered or even that some kind of deliberate censorship was applied to the letters. All I am saying is that what we do have is different from what Vivekananda actually wrote. Here is where both aspects of representation that I mentioned become crucial. Not only has Swamiji been presented to us in a particular way, but those who stand for him have exercised their right or power over how we might see him.

Let us consider the different genres of texts that make up the Complete Works. There are transcripts of speeches, original writings and translations, summaries of talks, letters,

[1] See *Kali's Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna* (1998).

poems, conversations, interviews, even newspaper reports. Clearly the last three cannot be considered the works of Swamiji himself — their authors are others who summarized, transcribed, reported, or quoted him. Clearly, then, there are different kinds of texts involved here. The issue is one of the ontological and epistemological status of the documents on the basis of which Vivekananda is represented. That is, how do we learn or how do we cognise Vivekananda? What is the validity of the various sources of such knowledge? What methods do we use to evaluate their validity or credence? Before we have a system or method of addressing, if not answering such questions, our claims and counter-claims on the message or thought or philosophy of Vivekananda will at best be tentative, if not altogether erroneous.

The Complete Works presents other difficulties. The arrangement is neither strictly chronological nor thematic. There is an order or a system of organization, but this is never clarified. The letters themselves occur in different volumes and in different series, as do poems, speeches, and other writings. Even if the order is chronological, there are different kinds of chronology: for example, the chronology of the works as Vivekananda himself wrote them and, in contradistinction, the chronology of the discovery or publication of the works. Thus, Volume 9 is entirely composed of works that were not known when the earlier editions of the earlier volumes were being published. Another serious problem with the contents is that the contexts or dates or even the exact occasions of the texts are not always indicated. For this we have to consult other sources, mainly the biographies of Vivekananda. But the problem is that the biographies themselves have been based, in large measure, on precisely these sources themselves. This difficulty gets compounded in the large number of anthologies of Vivekananda. In these, the Swami's works are wrenched out of their specific contexts so as to make them eternal

pronouncements, totally unrelated to space, time, or causality. For instance, Vivekananda may have said something on a particular topic, say, women, in a letter to a disciple. He may have said something else in a speech. He may have said a third thing in an essay that he published. Some of these comments may actually contradict each other. But not only are such contradictions removed, but the quotations sit next to each other in the anthology without any reference to where or when they first were written or spoken. The complexity or interpretive challenge of Vivekananda's thought is thus flattened out; the ideas, taken out of their contexts, are turned into prophetic utterances. Many arguments or claims are based on these secondary or even tertiary selections and arrangements. Instead of the "real" thing, we have a pre-packaged pre-cooked, even pre-digested Vivekananda, made easy, easy, simplified, at times, rendered even into an "instant Vivekananda."

My intention is not at all to criticise the Complete Works or the editors of the previous selections on Vivekananda. Those who have worked on such projects have often done so quite selflessly for years, rendering a great service to the reading public. Their books are products of their devotion and care. Lacking other sources, these are invaluable and without substitute for any serious scholar or student of Vivekananda. But, nevertheless, they leave scope for greater accuracy and improvement. The enterprise of Western scholarship is not only more competent, but much more open, at least in many cases. The result is a periodic updating and improvement in the methods and practices of textual scholarship. Textual scholarship, of course, is culturally embedded. In a culture such as India's, in which the most sacred texts, the Vedas, were never even written down to prevent them from being polluted and corrupted, and where the classical texts and treatises were often composed in highly compressed, mnemonic verses, the

expertise to deal with modern texts from a variety of sources is still limited. There is much that we have to learn and do to so recent a figure as Vivekananda. I might add that I also have nothing as such against various simplified versions of the master's ideas, including the justifiably popular "Thus Spake" series which the Ramakrishna Math has been publishing. Each of these anthologies represent Vivekananda to different audiences.

The purpose of this account of some of the issues and problems that occur in any attempt to understand Vivekananda is to point out the prerequisites of a genuine and far-reaching re-evaluation. I believe that this can only happen after we have a better edition of Vivekananda's works, and better biographical and textual sources at our disposal. In the meanwhile, the debates will centre on differing interpretations of already "known" data. It is to this that I shall turn my attention next. In this regards, I would argue that one's positions reveal as much about one's own values and prejudices as they do some facet of Vivekananda's personality or life-work.

Here it is important to remember that most of the biographies of the Swami are written from the point of view of Vivekananda's importance to India and its people. Perhaps there is a need to write a new life to suit the globalised world that we inhabit today. I do hope that such a biography gets written, because that is indeed the need of the day. For, as many commentators have noticed, Swamiji's message to the West was quite different from that to the East. When he faced the West, he spoke of the glories of Vedanta, trying to re-cast it as the foundation of a new universal religion. But when he faced his own countrymen and women, he was far more critical

and exhortatory. He wanted not only to transform Hinduism but also Indian people, uplifting them from the morass of oppression, depression, ignorance, and darkness into which they had sunk. As he said repeatedly, what he saw in India was just tamas (darkness) and cowardice masquerading as sattva or high philosophy. More than anything else, he abhorred the weakness of Indians: their lack of courage, dignity, and inactivity appalled him. The inertia, the atavism, and the quietism of the masses, an outcome of centuries of deprivation, violence, and incapacity produced an almost physiological reaction in him. But Vedantin that he was, somewhere in the soul of India this defeated, even crippled, civilization, Vivekananda still saw a spark of life and hope. Like breathing life again into a comatose body, Vivekananda re-awakened and re-energized the pranamaya kosa or the vital body of India. This dynamic aspect of the Swami's work, perhaps, far exceeded all his other achievements. This is the dimension that is not immediately visible or available to those who approach his works from a purely intellectual or mental perspective. These speeches of that Vivekananda gave on his return to India after his more than three-year sojourn in the U.S. are some of his most moving and powerful works. From Pamban, where he first landed after coming to the mainland from Sri Lanka, to Calcutta, where he made his way up in the space of a few weeks, Vivekananda had already presented not just a clear diagnosis of the ailment of India, but also the blue-print of its revival. Consequently, my own representation of Vivekananda emphasizes his role as the creator of a new India the visionary who gave a whole people the mahamantra of svaraj. I would even go so far as to argue that a major aspect of Vivekananda's impact on the West was indirectly through his vision of a new India. Vivekananda influenced the West directly by giving it the new philosophy of Vedanta but he also influenced it indirectly by giving Indians a new sociology of India.

Spiritual vs. Historical "Facts"

Let me now briefly return to a question that I had raised earlier: what constitutes and is recognizable as a "fact" in spiritual life? Or how important is literal truth in the representation of a religious figure? For instance, how important is it to know if during his parivrajika days Vivekananda travelled on foot, begging from door to door, or if he travelled, whenever possible by train, even first class? Did he stay anywhere and with anyone, or, were his preferred hosts people like himself, people he knew well—the Bengali bhadralok? Trivial in themselves, can such questions assume importance if certain larger claims are made about Vivekananda's life and character based on their answers? Or, let us consider another set of questions. How important is it to know if Vivekananda smoked or not? Whether he ate meat, even beef, and drank wine? These questions are not new and were answered uncompromisingly by Vivekananda himself. And yet our tendency, especially in India, remains to sanctify and sanitize such aspects of a saint's life. To give another example, how often are we in India aware that Jawaharlal Nehru smoked, and that too heavily? We hardly see pictures of him with a cigarette in his hand. Or that Aurobindo himself smoked until the 1920s? Or, to take the issue one level higher, that J. Krishnamurti allegedly had a sexual relationship for many years with Rosalind Rajagopal, the wife of his one-time friend and close associate? Perhaps, such questions are ultimately irrelevant to the life and mission of the spiritual person being studied. But what they do affect, quite certainly, is our understanding, our concept of what constitutes a spiritual life. Unlike some critics, I would not say that the public has a right to know. Not all kinds of knowledge are suitable to all people. For instance, in most cases, children do not need to know about the sexual lives of their parents. But, I would also argue that if and when such knowledge becomes essential to a fuller grasp of spiritual phenomena, it can be made available

to the adhikari or the qualified seeker. Indeed, personally, I deeply believe that when the sadhak or spiritual aspirant is ready, whatever knowledge is required will be given to him by the very intelligence that informs his spiritual pursuits. Indeed, I would contend that "adhikara," the right to know, like the right to information, as principle applies to both sadhaks and non-sadhaks. The latter may not accept it, but those who do (like the keepers of the legacy of a guru) must follow its dictates, thus being careful about what to divulge to whom.

These questions, as I have tried to argue, are not necessarily about the "character" of a saint or master, but are really about the character of spiritual life itself. My approach to them is that the spiritual life is not what some people consider it to be, sanitised, idealised, and stripped of all elements of what we call the human, the passionate, the sensual. Rather, the spiritual life uses all the powers and capacities that inhere within an individual in such a manner that they are directed to the higher end of self-perfection and self-mastery. As Swami Ramdas puts it, "Each individual has to draw upon all the latent resources of his or her existence in order to rise to the height of absolute freedom..." (Ramdas 2001, 3). In other words, a spiritual life is important not just for what it is, but for what it stands for, what it represents. In all, it represents the potential for divinity within that specific individual and within each human being. When we worship the guru or a saint, we worship our own capacity for perfection. The spiritual master shows us what we ourselves can be one day. So, the sole spiritual fact that matters is that of transformation, the mutation from the mundane level to a fuller manifestation of our latent potentialities. All the other details are of less importance. If that transformation or transcendence is denied, then there is little left of value in a spiritual life; it loses its special significance, becoming just another "ordinary" human life.

On this basis, let us now look at another kind of "fact" or "fiction." For instance, how important is it to discover whether Vivekananda actually swam to the rock now named after him, and that he stayed there for three days and nights, meditating on the future of India? The origin of such claims is the first edition of Swamiji's Life (1913) by his Eastern and Western disciples. Let us re-read the relevant passage: "He plunged into the ocean and in spite of numerous sharks, swam across to the temple, his mind eager as a child to see the Mother. And reaching the shrine he fell prostrate in ecstasy before the Image of the Goddess" (Eastern and Western Disciplies, 1913, Vol. 2, 101). Those who wrote this version had not visited Kanyakumari and were quite ignorant of the exact location either of the temple or of the rocks. The only mention of this event in Vivekananda's own writings occurs in a letter dated 19 March, 1894, to Ramakrishnananda from Chicago, written in Bengali:

At Cape Comorin sitting in Mother Kanya Kumari's temple, sitting on the last bit of Indian rock—I hit upon a plan: We are so many Sannyasins wandering about and teaching the people metaphysics—it is all madness.

Vivekananda clearly states that he meditated sitting in the temple, not on the rock to which he swam. Chattopadhyaya comments: "The story of his swimming the shark-infested waters was fabricated in the biographies.... Once started, however, it was impossible to get rid of the swimming episode. So modern biographies hold that he first worshipped the Devi and then went over to the rock" (Chattopadhayay 1999, 100-101). In the latest edition of the Life (1979), this is how the same incident is narrated: "After worshipping the Mother in the temple, it was to this holy rock that the Swami wanted to go for meditation. But how could he go? He had not a single pice for the boatman. Without more ado he plunged into those shark-infested waters and swam across" (Eastern and Western Disciples 1979, 341).

Chattopdhyaya, to my mind, argues fairly convincingly that the probability of Vivekananda's swimming across is small. Not only is there no mention of it anywhere in Vivekananda's own letters or reminiscences, but the original claim in the 1913 Life seems to have been based on the erroneous location of the temple on the island, instead of the mainland. The distance from the tip to the island is two furlongs. The notion that he swam because he didn't have the money to hire a boatman also seems to be implausible because his trip to Kanyakumari was sponsored by a Bengali gentleman, Manmath Bhattacharya, who accompanied him. Chattopadhyaya points out that from 1889, Vivekananda suffered from rheumatism, so it was unlikely that he would have swum across. If so, then on what basis do the writers of the latest edition of the Life stick to the tale of swimming across? Apparently, they have three eye witness accounts. One of these witnesses even claimed to have swum across himself to take food to the Swami. Of course! Vivekananda not only swam across, but stayed there for three days and nights on a barren rock, it would stand to reason that he would need to be fed. Interestingly, it is nowhere mentioned whether or not Vivekananda also swam back from the rock. Chattopadhyaya, of course, dismisses these witnesses either as unreliable or the whole story of witnesses itself: "All these stories of witnesses seeing him meditating for three nights and fasting seem concocted" (Chattopadhayay 1999, 100-101). On the other hand, as Niveditaji of the Vivekananda Centre once challenged me, "Can you prove that he did not swim across? If not, there is certainly scope for the belief that he did."

In one of the first books on Sri Ramakrishna, Ramakrishna: His Life and Sayings, F. Max Müller, addresses the same issue. He speaks of the "Dialectic Process" and the "Dialogic Process" as ways in which a new religion or sect "springs up and grows" through the changes produced by "repletion, conversation" and "oral tradition":

Even Hegel's Dialectic Process, the movement of the idea by itself, that leads irresistibly from positive to negative and to conciliation, has its origin in what I should prefer to call by a wider name the Dialogic Process, of the greatest importance in history, both ancient and modern. (Müller 1951, 25)

The latter, according Müller, is the process by which a fact gets modified through repetition, transmission, and exchange before (and after) it becomes history. Hence, "We do not and cannot know of any historical event that has not previously passed through this Dialogic Process" (26). This accounts for all the "contradictions" and "miracles" which are otherwise not intelligible or natural. Taking this into account, we may discover a way of getting to the kernel of truth even if it is surrounded by many embellishments: "many a story distorted by the childish love of the miraculous will regain its true moral character, many a face disguised by a misplaced apotheosis will look upon us again with his truly human, loving, and divine eyes" (28). Müller, however, sometimes confuses us by using dialectic and dialogic interchangeably (see 29), in describing how oral traditions work. Interestingly, he claims that even Swami Vivekananda's responses to his queries were free of "the irrepressible miraculising tendencies of devoted disciplies" (30). In the end, he ends up choosing whatever he considers authentic after sifting (threshing) through what he has gathered.

But what Müller does not allow is that there are many kinds of truth, and at times, legends, myths, and fiction are more appealing and persuasive than facts. Indeed, one would need to invent a new category of fact to understand what actually happened in the case of a spiritual phenomenon. Let us call this the "poetic" fact to differentiate it from the "historical" fact. Let me offer one illustration. In the 1960s, perhaps, still unaware of the doubts cast on the swimming episode, Eknath Ranade campaigned all over India for funds to build the Vivekananda Rock Memorial on the island on which

Vivekananda was supposed to have meditated but in actual fact he may never have even visited! Those who have visited that memorial know what a noble and heroic endeavour it was. With state support and donations from ordinary people, more than rupees one crore was raised for the project. Inaugurated in 1970, the Memorial also has an adjoining campus of about 100 acres. Anyone who goes to visit it cannot but be impressed by it. Whether or not Vivekananda actually went to this rock, the Memorial stands to commemorate his visit. Though based perhaps on an error, there is no denying either its materiality or its capacity to inspire lakhs of visitors annually.

So which version is true? Which is a fact? I would simply say both are true, but in different ways. We know that in the last twenty years, the truth claims of history have come to be severely challenged.[1] What passes for history is just another narrative, another sort of story, which is not much different from fiction in its use of words, metaphors, and linguistic figuration. It is also informed by a textuality that attests to its constructedness. Histories, in fact, resemble novels and other kind of fictional narratives. They too have a beginning, a middle, and an end; they have heroes and villains; they also have plots, characters, situations, settings, atmosphere, what is more they even have climaxes, reversals, denouements. On the other hand, as we all know only too well, myths, legends, novels, and other kinds of fiction are perhaps more "true" than facts. Even "science" which has scrupulously constructed itself over the last five hundred years so as to exclude any scope for error or inaccuracy, is itself not a fixed, unchanging essence.[2] To say that "according to science" or

[1] See the works of Michel Foucault, particularly *The Order of Things* ([1966] 2002) and Hayden White's *Tropics of Discourse* (1986), possibly the most extensive discussion of the idea.

[2] See, for instance, Karl Popper's *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (2002) and the notion of "paradigm shifts" in Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962).

"science says," then, is an absurdity, because we need to specify which type of science, of what period, according to whom, and of what culture. The category of science is neither beyond time, space, context, and subject as is that of fact. For example, classical physics is a totally different kind of science from quantum mechanics. So is the case with the "fact."

So, I would suggest that both the versions of Swamiji's experience at Kannyakumari are "true." One is probably the historical truth—that he meditated in the temple on the mainland in the Kanyakumari temple, as he himself wrote in his letter, and that did not swim across to the rock; the other, consequently, is a poetic or truth that many still believe and find inspiring. Does this mean that I consider that the two are unrelated? On the contrary, in modern times, it would be advantageous, in the long run, for the spiritual truth to have its roots in the soil of the physical or the factual truth. But from there, it may soar to any height that it aspires to. The two kinds of truth ought, ideally, to support and reinforce each other. That is why the issue of representation that I have been discussing is so crucial. That is why we need exacting, even "scientific" methods and expectations from our scholars. And yet, if and when, as is bound to be the case, these truths clash, we must allow for both of them to be valid in their own way.

To sum up, I would argue that a spiritual fact is a combination of a historical fact and a poetic fact. Usually, the latter two may go hand in hand, but when they appear to clash, we can have plural narratives which the historian or the sadhaka may each approach in his or her own way.

Within the spiritualpath, the bhakta (devotee), the jnani (knower), and the karma yogi (selfless worker) approach reality in different ways. This must apply even to Vivekananda himself. To say that one approach is the best would not be a sanatani or svarajist position. To say that all are the same or equally

true would not hold up to modern scrutiny. To be a modern sanantani, then, is to discover a new path to the truth that is Vivekananda, a path which is not only committed to finding the "truth," but one which allows, even invites, many different versions of it, all the while retaining the privilege of choosing not just individually, but for larger collectives, what is the most suitable, persuasive, pragmatic, and therefore, true path. In the present case, I would say that I cannot be sure that Vivekananda actually swam across to the rock, but I am sure that I appreciate the Memorial which commemorates his visit to the southernmost tip of India. What Vivekananda's life stands for, what the Memorial stands for, cannot be controverted by his not actually have swum to the rock. The bhatka (devotee) and the historian, in other words, do not necessarily historian, in other words, do not necessarily have to be at odds. A good bhakta can be a good historian and vice-versa.

Impact and Significance

From a bare outline of his life, extraordinary as it was, it is impossible to form a notion of just how great Vivekananda's influence or impact were. In a book that is otherwise unsparingly critical, Narasinga P. Sil marks the astonishing power of the sheer splendour of Vivekananda's personality. For instance, when Mrs Allan sees him for the first time, she says: "[He] seemed to me so big, as though he towered above ordinary mortals. The people on the street looked like pygmies and he had such a majestic presence that people stepped aside to let him pass by" (quoted in Sil 1997, 22). Or, to cite another example, Josephine MacLeod, one of most faithful and long-standing admirers, recorded: "The thing that held me in Swamiji is his unlimitedness. I could never touch the bottom—or top—or sides. The amazing size of him!" (quoted in Sil 1997, 23). As Romain Rolland in his Prelude to The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel, puts it: "his pre-eminent characteristic was kingliness. He was a born king and nobody ever came

near him either in India or America without paying homage to his majesty" (Rolland 1947, 5). In his painstaking and exhaustive compilation, Vivekananda: A Comprehensive Study, Swami Jyotirmayananda quotes other well-known personages, some of whose views on Vivekananada bear repetition:

C. Rajagopalachari: "Swami Vivekananda saved Hinduism and saved India. But for him we would have lost our religion and would not have gained our freedom. We, therefore, owe everything to Swami Vivekananda." (Jyotirmayananda 1993, 678-9)

Jawaharlal Nehru: "He was not a politician in the ordinary sense of the word and yet he was, I think, one of the great founders... of the national modern movement of India...." (679)

Annie Besant: "A striking figure, clad in yellow and orange, shining like the sun of India in the midst of the heavy atmosphere of Chicago, a lion-head, piercing eyes, mobile lips, movement swift and fast—such was my first impression of Swami Vivekananda.... Monk, they called him, not unwarrantably, but warrior-monk he was, and the first impression was the warrior rather than of the monk.... Purposeful, virile, strong, he stood out, a man among men, able to hold his own. ... 'That man a heathen!' said one, as he came out of the great Hall, and we send missionaries to his people! It would be more fitting that they should send missionaries to us." (689)

K. M. Panikkar: "What gave Indian nationalism its dynamism and ultimately enabled it to weld at least the major part of India into one state was the creation of a sense of community among the Hindus to which the credit should to a very large extent go to Swami Vivekananda. This new Sankaracharya may well be claimed to be a unifier of Hindu ideology. Travelling all over India he not only aroused a sense of Hindu feeling but taught the doctrine of a universal Vedanata

as the background of the new Hindu reformation.... It is Vivekananda who first gave to the Hindu movement its sense of nationalism and provided most of the movements with a common all-India outlook." (279)

As some of these opinions affirm, Vivekananda's greatest achievements include the reconstruction of Hinduism, the change of its image in the West, the starting of a movement of social and cultural regeneration, all of which were directly linked to the birth of Indian nationalism, which was taking place at that time. The key to all these contributions was Vivekananda's modernization of Hinduism. Indeed, the Hinduism that he spoke about and expounded at the Parliament of Religions and, later, all over America was a new version, mostly of his own invention, of an ancient tradition. What he learned from Ramakrishna he tried to interpret in the language of modernity that he imbibed as a young English-educated Calcutta man. Instead of a pagan, superstitious, idolatrous, and barbarous set of rituals, customs, and practices, which is how Hinduism had been by and large perceived, not just by missionaries, but by a large section of the educated middle-classes of India,' Vivekananda turned it into a rational, universal philosophy, freed from dogma and authority. He did this by making Vedanta the spine of new Hinduism, bhakti (faith) its heart, and the yogas its sinews. For the West, what he brought was indeed original and promising. As Ninian Smart says: "The universalist message of Swami Vivekananda and of his Master, Ramakrishna, genuinely represents a new departure in world religions—the attempt to make the highest form of Hinduism a world faith" (quoted in Jyotirmayananda 1993, 182). He thus re-interpreted Hinduism not only to the West but to India. Essentially, his message was two-fold: when he faced the West, he was a teacher and practitioner of Indian spirituality; when he faced his fellow countrymen and women, he was a social reformer.

As Tapan Raichaudhuri observes, "Vivekananda had a two-fold agenda which he had time to pursue for less than a decade: to preach an universalist spiritual faith based on the life of his master which he saw as the ultimate realization of the Vedantic truth, and secondly, to create a mass consciousness through service and education" (Raichaudhuri 1998, 16).

In a reading of his selected letters, I had argued that Vivekananda's reconstruction of Hinduism consisted essentially of four elements: a) non-sectarianism; b) anti-ritualism; c) religion in the service of humanity; d) Advaita as the future religion of thinking humanity (Paranjape 1991, 178-179). Such ideas, and his ceaseless propagation of them resulted in the creation of what Basu, in her book-length study, calls "dialogic Hinduism":

It was dialogic in two senses: within the interior of the nation itself it sought to bridge the gulf between conservatives and the reformists, and in the context of Europe it sought to accommodate many of the Enlightenment values of rationalism, the spirit of scientific enquiry, and the tenets of universal literacy. (Basu 2002, 196)

Of course, Vivekananda's message to the West was not always welcomed or well-received. On the contrary, it was often conveyed in the most hostile of circumstances. After his initial success, Vivekananda was regularly attacked and reviled by various Christian churches. Letters were written to his hosts and well-wishers, tarnishing his character, attempting to stop him from speaking. Vivekananda, with his outspokenness, exposed the fanaticism and falsehood of his detractors. Despite his great reverence for Jesus Christ, on whom he delivered some memorable talks, he was unsparing of the double standards and narrow-mindedness of some missionaries. For instance, in a lecture given at Detroit on 21 February 1894, he said:

"One thing I would tell you, and I do not mean any unkind

criticism. You train and educate and clothe and pay men to do what? To come over to my country to curse and abuse all my forefathers, my religion, and everything. They walk near a temple and say, "You idolaters, you will go to hell." But they dare not do that to the Mohammedans of India; the sword would be out. But the Hindu is too mild; he smiles and passes on, and says, "Let the fools talk." That is the attitude. And then you who train men to abuse and criticise, if I just touch you with the least bit of criticism, with the kindest of purpose, you shrink and cry, "Don't touch us; we are Americans. We criticise all the people in the world, curse them and abuse them, say anything; but do not touch us; we are sensitive plants." ...
(Vivekananda 2003, Vol. 8, 211-212)

No wonder, even two years later, when he returned to Detroit, on 3 March 1896, he was greeted thus by the Detroit Evening News:

"The Hindoo-Brahmin-Buddhist fad of an effete and rotten orientalism has run its course in the east, and it has been found that there is nothing in it... After all these eastern isms had had their say, there was a regular mania throughout the occident for the religions that had done little for the masses of their votaries but to make dirty, lazy beggars of them...He [Vivekananda] told not a single truth that does not form a stone in the foundation of our own western faith, but whenever Kananda [sic.] said a pretty and truthful thing which may be heard from at Christian pulpits every day, he was applauded to the echo by the people who know so little about the religion of their own fathers that they actually thought that this brown-faced Hindoo was making a new revelation to them.... Kananda [sic.] had come to be forgotten and his work had utterly perished with him. And he is back again! ... His very presence is no compliment to the religious stability of Detroit."
(Burke 1983-1986, Vol. IV, 17-18)

The record shows that he faced much of this hostility with silence, indifference, and rare counter-attacks. In one of his

more effusive responses in a letter of 1 February 1985, he writes to Mary Hale, quoting Tulsidas, "when a great soul appears there will be numbers to bark after him" (Vivekananda 2003, Vol. 5, 73).

Vivekananda was also quite scathing in his attack on the Indian society of his time. One of his most radical theses was that India had declined because of its neglect of women. "We are horrible sinners," he says in his letter of 19 March 1894 to Swami Ramakrishnananda, "and our degradation is due to our calling women, 'despicable worms,' 'gateways to hell,' and so forth...." (Vivekananda 2003, Vol. 6, 253). In the same letter he goes on to say, " Do you think our religion is worth the name? Ours is only Don't-touchism, only 'Touch me not,' 'Touch me not....' (ibid). In his letter to Alasinga Perumal, he is even more categorical:

"So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them! I call those men who strut about in their finery, having got all their money by grinding the poor, wretches, so long as they do not do anything for those two hundred millions who are now no better than hungry savages!" (Vivekananda 2003, Vol. 5, 58)

From statements such as these, it would appear that Vivekananda had a complete programme for the regeneration of India. In his speech in Ramnad (included in this volume), he clearly spelt out the dangers before his fellow-Indians:
There are two great obstacles on our path in India, the Scylla of old orthodoxy and the Charybdis of modern European civilisation. Of these two, I vote for the old orthodoxy, and not for the Europeanised system; for the old orthodox man may be ignorant, he may be crude, but he is a man, he has a faith, he has strength, he stands on his own feet; while the Europeanised man has no backbone, he is a mass of heterogeneous ideas picked up at random from every source

—and these ideas are unassimilated, undigested, unharmonised. He does not stand on his own feet, and his head is turning round and round (Vivekananda 2003, Vol. 3, 151).

Indeed, if Vivekananda had not died young, he may have come into more direct conflict with the British authorities. His aim of decolonising India would have met with severe repression from the British authorities. Even a century later, however, the great task of freeing Indian minds from a subservience to the West has, however, not yet been fully affected.

As the authors of his Life summarize, Vivekananda's agenda for India consisted of the following:
(1) the need to raise the masses, give them opportunities for all-round development 'without injuring their religion'; (2) the need to remove untouchability; (3) the need for the well-to-do to assist the suffering millions; (4) the need to give women opportunities for proper education and self-improvement; (5) the need for the universal spread of the right kind of education; (6) the need to cultivate the material sciences; (7) the need for technological and industrial development; and, above all, (8) the need to give freedom to society for its onward movement. (Vivekananda 2003, Vol. 1: 530-531)
Such a comprehensive programme articulated so clearly and consistently, was Vivekananda's long-lasting contribution to the building of modern India. Before Gandhi, it was Vivekananda who integrally combined personal spiritual practice with a larger social responsibility, drawing the middle classes into the larger national struggle.

What made his "neo-Hinduism" special was Vivekananda's insistence on making social service the vehicle of modernization. As Basu observes:
In the absence of social and economic justice, the only way of exhibiting the attributes of a rational society is through social

service for the uplift of the underprivileged .... [I]n a society under domination economic liberation can only come about through a form of rigorous social service, which he sought to advocate as the ultimate spiritual act. Rather than segregating the ancient society from the rest of the world, Vivekananda's nationalism sought to ensure that a form of the Enlightenment was ushered in through the modern use of the Hindu religion which could enter into a dialogue with Western rationalism. (Basu 2002, 201).

According to her, this is what distinguishes Vivekananda's dialogic Hinduism from "Brahmo scholasticism" and the "pastoralism of the revivalists" (196).

When we observe the various responses to imperialism and modernity, we see in Vivekananda a unique trajectory that neither rejects modernity nor accepts imperial domination. Unlike M. K. Gandhi, whose rejection of modern civilization may be considered "romantic," or Jawaharlal Nehru's scientific-secularist acceptance of it, Vivekananda shows a qualified acceptance of modernity along with a rejection of both materialism and imperialism. In this, the person who follows him closest is Sri Aurobindo. It was Vivekananda who first tried to synthesise the yogas in modern times; his treatises on Raja Yoga, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, and Jnana Yoga, were the early attempts in this direction. Aurobindo built on these in his own work, The Synthesis of Yoga where he refers to Vivekananda (Aurobindo 1972, 6). Aurobindo, in turn, acknowledged the influence of Vivekananda on him, admitting that Vivekananda had "visited" him during Aurobindo's incarceration in the Alipur jail. That there was something quite unique in Vivekananda is attested to even by people who met him for just a few minutes. For example, Vivienne Baumfield shows the influence of Vivekananda on Sir Jamsetji Tata, the doyen of Indian industry and the founder of the Tata group. Vivekananda met

Tata on a ship and asked the latter to help create men devoted to the sciences both "natural and humanistic" (Baumfield 1998, 207). Jamsetji, who acknowledged Vivekananda's inspiration, went on to found the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore. According to Baumfield, the phrase "Science and Sanskrit" encapsulates Vivekananda's desire to bring together "the best aspects of both the traditional Hindu and Western systems of education" (194). Vivekananda's scientific thought has received much attention at the hands of authors like Swami Jitatmananda, who has argued that Vivekananda anticipates some of the insights of Quantum Mechanics and New Physics. One of the reasons that Vivekananda continues to appeal to so many diverse kinds of people is because he was so radical and unconventional. In his letter of 1 November 1896 to Mary Hale, for example, he said, "I am a socialist not because I think it is a perfect system, but half a loaf is better than no bread. The other systems have been tried and found wanting. Let this one be tried" (Vivekananda 2003, Vol. 6, 381). Some have used such statements to invent a new category of thought called "Vedantic Socialism," attributing it to Vivekananda. Indeed, there have been several attempts, many of them serious and at considerable length, to argue that Vivekananda was a socialist (see for example, Biswas, Das Gupta, and Rao in Works Cited). The latest of these efforts is the booklet Vivekananda's Message, edited by A. B. Bardhan, a veteran of the Communist Party of India (CPI), who claims to rescue Swamiji from fundamentalists and right-wing Hindus (see Roy 2003, 9).

Vivekananda's social thought, gleaned from his numerous writings, has been the subject of considerable interest. For instance, in the aforementioned letter of 1 November 1896 he outlines his theory of what Sri Aurobindo later so eloquently called The Human Cycle. Vivekananda speaks of the progressive shift in the rulers of the world, from the initial Brahmin phase to the now incumbent (some would say prevalent) Shudra

period. Ideas such as these were later developed more extensively by P. C. Sarkar (Sri Anandamurti) in his notion of the Progressive Utilization Theory (Inayatullah 1999, 3-4).

I would even argue that Vivekananda was perhaps India's first modern global citizen. No doubt, there were others such as Raja Rammohun Roy before him who had a similar breadth of outlook and cosmopolitan tendencies; indeed, Rammohun lived the last months of his life in England. But no one before him had lived and travelled so extensively in the West, especially in the United States. Vivekananda was thus bi-cultural in a very contemporary way—he could live with equal ease in two cultures and three continents. He is thus a crossover figure, much ahead of his times, but a precursor to many others who followed his tracks later.

Mary Louise Burke's meticulous and exhaustive account of his travels in the West give us a picture of man who was both worldly and deeply spiritual in a complex way. For instance, during his stay at Ridgely Manor, he tried to play golf and greatly enjoyed chocolate ice cream (Burke 1983-1986, Vol. IV, 120-127). Generally, he ate well, even smoked and drank, but always maintained his two vows of poverty and chastity. This is illustrated in Deussen's account as Vivekananda's "roommate" during their travels from Bremen to London in September 1896. "You seem to be a queer sort of saint," Deussen said to him, "You eat well, you drink well, you smoke all day, and you deprive yourself of nothing." He replied in Sanskrit: "I observe my vows." "And what consists of your vows?" "They require me simply Kama Kanchana Viraha, to renounce sex and gold" (283-288). Some critics have used such accounts to exaggerate Vivekananda's inner and outer conflicts. Notably, Sil describes Vivekananda's life as "the striving of an ambitious, idealistic, impulsive, and imaginative militant monk who envisioned, rather naively, a global spiritualization in the manner of a Napoleonic conquest" (Sil 1997, 25). In his attempt

to demystify Vivekananda, he goes to the other extreme of considering his life's mission a failure: In the end his fantastic vision of Hindu India bearing the beacon of spiritual light to the world never materialized. The impossibility and impracticability of such a monumental undertaking finds a pathetic expression in his final confession of failure at the end of his diseased, tumultuous and troubled life.... (Sil 1997, 25-26) He concludes that Vivekananda far from being "the herald of a brave new world of spiritual humanism" was actually "a tragic figure whose brief but tumultuous public life was spent contending with multiple tensions and conflicts...." (181).

Despite such attempts to "historicise" and debunk Vivekananda, his enormous power and dynamism have continued to inspire generations of Indians and Westerners. Apart from the Math and Mission that he founded, several other organizations and institutions have been set up in his name, supposedly to promote the causes that he stood for. Of these, one of the most remarkable is the aforementioned Vivekananda Kendra at Kannyakumari founded by Eknath Ranade. Whether or not Vivekananda swam to the rock on which Ranade built the impressive Memorial, the story of the latter's construction is remarkable. The idea of a memorial was mooted in 1963 by the Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee in celebration of Vivekananda's 100th birth anniversary. Ranade joined the Committee as its Organizing Secretary. With untiring zeal and persistence, he secured the permission from the state and central governments, raising money through small donations of common people. Inaugurated in 1970, the Memorial has an adjoining campus of about 100 acres. Ranade also had in mind the building of a Vivekananda Kendra International, but died on 22 August 1982. Recently, S. Gurumurthy and others have fulfilled this dream too, by establishing such a centre in New

Delhi. While Ranade's example may be exceptional, it is not unusual. All over India, there are schools, colleges, hospitals, roads, and residential colonies named after Vivekananda. In face of such overwhelming popularity and capacity to inspire, the notion that he ended his "career on a note of despondency and defeat..." and that "He ended his life not in delusion ... but in disillusionment" (Sil 1997, 177) is hard to believe or sustain. All in all, an assessment such as Amiya Sen's seems more balanced and plausible: "instead of typifying Vivekananda either as an ascetic or activist, reformer or conservative, patriot or prophet, it would be more reasonable to accept that he was perhaps all of these" (Sen 2000, 98).

It is reliably learnt, particularly from verifiable oral testimony, that after his great success in India, Vivekananda was under surveillance by British authorities. In a personal conversation on 16 November 2003, Swami Prabhananda, the present Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission, said that there is sufficient evidence to show that he was under surveillance of the British for several years. Had his work of nation building continued along certain lines, there is no doubt that the colonial government would have tried to check or arrest him. Though his ideas were about India's spiritual resurgence, they pointed to, indeed required, its political independence too. In that sense, he was truly one of the founders of Indian nationalism. In a broader sense, the "work" that he embarked upon had many strands inextricably interwoven together; to separate, say, the political from the spiritual is thus not entirely feasible.

Not just the more overtly religious nationalist line from Bankim to Tilak to Aurobindo, but even the moderate line from Ranade to Gokhale to Gandhi (as Gokhale 1964 shows), believed in India's destiny as a vanguard of spirituality. Both sides understood that Indian nationalism needed a religious, dharmic basis. Vivekananda was central to this whole

conception. None of these men, however, were religious fanatics or haters of other communities. Though their idea of nationalism was decidedly Hindu in character and spirit, it was neither majoritarian nor sectarian. They wanted a plural and democratic polity, which paid special attention to the disadvantaged and downtrodden sections of society. In a sense, Tagore too, despite his reservations against nationalism as a violent, chauvinistic, and imperialistic force, did wish for a svadeshi samaj (indigenous society) which was the outcome of the spirit of the people expressing itself. Muslim, Dalit, Marxist, and ultra-secularist nationalisms in India, however, do not fit this pattern. Even today, the result is an unease over what sort of nation we inhabit and where it is headed.

Fulfilling his own prophecy, Vivekananda died before he reached the age of forty. The (ongoing) story of the imagining of modern India, of which he was a key agent, is one of the most fascinating narratives in the history of humanity. The life and works of Swami Vivekananda are central to this story and to those who wish to understand it. But a man like Vivekananda belongs not only to India but also to the whole world. As he himself proclaimed, "I shall not cease to work. I shall inspire men everywhere, until the world shall know that it is one with God" (Vivekananda 2003, Vol. 5, 414). More than 100 years later that promise continues to be kept.

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■

The Secret of Meditation :

The meditational process recommended by Badarayana justifies Samkara's Advaitism. The lord and not the symbol must be looked upon as the self. This is evidently regarded as the highest type of meditation. It is only those, who can successfully practise the unitive meditation, says Badarayana, then those will be finally liberated. It may be remocked that even when the Lord is looked upon as the self a trace of duality still lingers. But when the self is looked upon as the Self, duality disappears. This last however, is not given. This is the secret of meditation.

-Gurudeo Ranade

in Vedas as Culmination of Indian Thought, p. 166.

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THE UNIVERSAL RELIGION OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

-Prof. M. L. Sharma

Romain Rolland in his biography of Swami Vivekananda referring to his imposing presence at the inaugural meeting of The Parliament of Religions opened in September 1873 at Chicago says, "All fellow members were forgotten in his commanding presence. His strength and beauty, the dignity and grace of his bearing, the dark light of his eyes, his imposing appearance, and from the moment he began to speak, the splendid music of his deep voice enthralled the vast audience of Anglo-Saxons, previously prejudiced against him on account of his colour. Thought of this warrior prophet of India left a deep mark upon the United States." It was impossible to imagine him in the second place. Wherever he went he was the first.

Vivekananda stood for a Universal Religion which embraced the truth of all religions of the world. It was not simply the "tolerance" of other religions, but frankly an assertion of their equal share in Truth. He says, "I accept all religions that were in the past, and worship with them all; I worship God with any one of them .... Is God's book finished or is it still a continuous revelation going on? It is a marvelous ok, ...these Spiritual Revelations of the world. The Bible, The Vedas, the Koran, and

all other sacred books are but so many pages, and infinite number of pages remains yet to be unfolded. ...We stand in the present, but open ourselves to the infinite future. We take in all that has been in the past, enjoy light of the present, and open every window of the heart for all that will come in the future. Salutation to all the prophets of the past, to all the great ones of the present, and to all that are to come in the future!"

With regard to the resolution of the disputes among individuals for holding some convictions, Vivekananda formulated two maxims of conduct. The first : "Do not destroy", - Build, if you can; if not, you simply look on. The second: "Take man as he stands, and from thence give him a lift" along his own road. He tells us not to fear that you will miss your own road to God, because He is the centre of all the radii, and each of us is converging towards Him along one of them. The differences disappear at the centre. Vivekananda held the conviction that spirituality is dormant in every man. Hence abandon the idea that you can give spirituality to others. Some gifted master has only to awaken that latent spirituality in man. Thus respect for human individuality and freedom was the essence of his religion. He saw God in every living being, and believed in his freedom to develop in his own way. This conviction of Vivekananda is rooted in the ancient Upanishad which says, "Whatever exists in this universe is to be covered with the Lord. "We should hold fast the truth that all belongs to the Lord, and put God in our evey movement. The whole scene changes and the world, instead of appearing as one of woe and misery, will become a Heaven". He following extracts from a poem of Vivekananda express succintly all the principles of the universal religion and of practical Vedanta preached by him:

"Awake, arise and dream no more!
...Be bold, and face The Truth!
Be one with it!

Let visions cease,
Or, if you cannot, dream but truer dreams,
Which Eternal Love and Service free."

In his Raja Yoga he says, "Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divine within, by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this, either by work, worship, or Philosophy - by one or more or all of these ...and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines or dogmas, or rituals or books, or temples or forms are but secondary details."

Vivekananda once compared God to an artist or a poet. The universe is like a picture only to be enjoyed by the man who had devoured it with his eyes without any intention of buying it. Again, he says that the universe is God's poem, coming in verses and rhythms, written in infinite bliss. But he warns that one should not remain an inactive spectator of the Universe enjoying it aesthetically. To counter this he propounded his doctrine of Practical Vedanta. Seeing God in all beings, he was full of compassion for the suffering humanity, and engaged himself in the service of the Daridranarayana (God in the form of fellow beings) with great fury.

His universal soul was rooted in human soul; and the smallest pang suffered by its incarnate flesh sent a repercussion through the whole tree.

He himself was the embodied unity of a nations containing a hundred different nations, wherein each nation, divided and subdivided into castes and sub-castes, seems like one of those diseased persons whose blood is too liquid to congeal - and his ideal was unity, both of thought and action. His claim to greatness lies in the fact that he not only proved its unity but he stamped it upon the heart of India.

Vivekanand's practical Vedanta consists not simply in realization of the Brahman he declared that Brahman is to be actually experienced in every human being and everyone is to be provided with food, education and opportunities for development of his personality. Mere realization of Brahman for one self and continue to meditate on Brahman in isolation from the rest of humanity did not satisfy him. As such, he travelled throughout India to help uplift the whole nation of millions of people. In his very short life limited to less than 40 years he was highly successful in spreading the message of his universal religion.

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■

Bande Mataram : Many of us , utterly overcome by Tamas the dark and heavy Demon of Inertia, are saying now-a-days that it is impossible, that India is decayed, bloodless and lifeless, too weak ever to recover; that our race is doomed to extinction. It is a foolish and idle saying. No man or nation need to be weak unless he chooses, no man or nation need perish unless he deliberately chooses extinction.

-Aurobindo in 1907.

One need now no longer ask, what is the relation between the moral and the sublime ? Is the moral more divine than the sublime or the sublime more divine than the moral ? It is enough for us to know that the Moral, the Sublime and the Divine, all merge in one consumate Philosophy and Spirit like that of Bhagvadgita.

-Dr. R. D. Ranade,
in Bhagvadgita as Philosophy of God Realisation.

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THE POETRY OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

- N. Pratima

Swami Vivekananda has expressed his deep thoughts on man, nature and universe not only in his lectures and writings, but also in poems written in Bengali which have been translated into English. His poems in English translation are not large in number, but they certainly contain his mystic insight into reality, and are gems of the Vedanta philosophy. Poetry appears to be the most suitable vehicle for the expression of spiritual truths and metaphysical concepts. The great philosophical texts in India are in verse, so is much of the literature on religion. Poetic diction is having an invariable relation with rhythm and harmony which together produce a deep impact on the mind and heart of the human being. In the presence of rhythm and harmony poetry gains a rare musical quality, which has the power to touch the inner-most depths of human nature. Therefore, the mystics down through the ages have poured their thoughts and spiritual experiences in the poetic form. The discourses given by great prophets and saints possess a deep rhythm and music which sinks into the conscious and the unconscious mind. Swami Vivekananda's discourses delivered in India and abroad read like poetry. His expression is most fluent yet lucid and devoid of unnecessary verbiage. His words are saturated with the spirit of universality and spirituality. His thought is the synthesis of the noble ideas belonging to traditions of the East and West. The spiritual and the secular lose their difference in the thought of Swami Vivekananda. There is the fusion of all contradictions in his message. He has touched on the manifold aspects of human life and has projected the

picture of the ideal life and social order which can help the human being realise his true essence. Swami Vivekanand says,

Aye, born heir to the Infinite thou art,
Within the heart is the ocean of Love,'

In his poem "The Hymn of Creation" Swami Vivekananda has given an idea of the process of creation. This poem expresses his mystic awareness of reality as well as his mastery over the religious and philosophical texts of India. He points out that prior to creation there existed,

One Mass, devoid of form, name and colour,
Timeless, devoid of time past and future,
Spaceless, voiceless, boundless, devoid of all-
Where rests hushed even speech of negation.'

In the beginning there were no shapes and forms, animate or inanimate products, except the Premordial Substance which is above time and space with dimensions beyond any measurement. Such an original Substance defies all attempts to attribute specific qualities and names to it. He says that neither the positive nor the negative descriptions of the reality existing before creation was possible. No language could describe the real substance which is the source of everything in the vast universe. Swami Vivekanand has the breadth of vision possessed only by the ancient seers of India, and his thoughts convey the nature of spiritual reality to the humanity in the new age.

He points out in the " Hymn of Creation" that everything which exists has its origin in the Infinite Substance. Whatever exists and whatever has existed in the past or shall appear in the future are all belonging to the One Truth.

Millions of moons, millions of suns,
Taking their birth in that very ocean,
Rushing headlong with din tumultuous,
Overspread the whole firmament, drowning
The points of heaven, in light effulgent.'

In the breathtaking expanses of the universe there exist innumerable planetary bodies. The modern astronomers say that there are giant suns whose light has not reached us. Swami Vivekananda's poetic imagination is saturated fully with the spiritual colour and his description of the universe is through the medium of familiar symbols. He has not used abstruse symbols in his poetry in the tradition of the metaphysical poets of the west. He is believer both in spirituality and science. Therefore, there is a combination of the subtlety of spirituality and the concreteness of science in his poetry.

Swami Vivekananda has pointed out that every atom contains the essence of the ultimate truth and within it the creative energy lies in a compressed and dormant form. This primordial energy takes many forms in creation, described by him in his poem " Thy Hymn of Creation". Every speck of animate and inanimate substance has the creative energy within it and the mystic hears the words "I am", "I am", "I am" coming out of them. In creation the pure light of consciousness emerges from the primordial reality, and disappears into it at the hour of final disintegration without undergoing any change. Creation and disintegration without undergoing any change. Creation and destruction are qualified as mere evolution and involution of the one reality. In his poem "Hymn of Samadhi" he says,

Slowly, slowly, the shadow-multitude
Entered the primal womb, and flowed ceaseless,
The only current, the "I am ", "I am ".

The original substance remains the same, for the cycle of creation and destruction do not effect it in any way says Swami Vivekananda. In his "Hymn to Shiva" which is in Sanskrit he says that Shiva is the source of all creation, preservation and dissolution. The primordial truth remains the same in creation, existence and destruction. Everything is destined to go back to the original source.

In his poem "A Song I Sing to Thee", Swami Vivekananda expressed his faith in the ameliorating power which is the source of creation. In the contemplation of all the pervading reality he finds the solace of his life. He says that his humble existence will become meaningful once he is the receipient of the grace and blessings of the One. He points out that nothing else is significant than the knowledge of truth. Swami Vivekananda salutes both the Purusha and Prakriti, for he finds that the spiritual and the material are part of the one reality. He acknowledges everything in him is a gift of the divine power.

Thou art my Master! Thou my soul's real mate -
Many a time I see Thee, - I am Thee!
Aye! I am Thee and Thou, my Lord, art me!
Thou art within my speech. Within my throat
Art Thou, as Vinapani, learned wise.'

Swami Vivekananda has expressed the essence of Vedanta philosophy in his poems and discourses. He is one of the great Vedantins who has conveyed the meaning and relavance of Vedanta to the modern world. His message has a perennial value. He has given equal importance to the Bhakti marga and the Jnana marga and finds no contradiction between the path of devotion and the path of knowledge. In his poem "A Song I Sing to Thee" he has stressed on the relevance of these two paths in the realisation of the ultimate truth.

A Song I Sing. A Song I Sing to Thee!
Nor care I for men's comments, good or bad
Censure or praise I hold of no account.'

In these verses there is a firm approach of faith and devotion towards the ultimate truth or God. Swami Vivekananda affirms that the personal God is identical with the absolute truth. He maintains that a devotee should not mind the inimical opinions of others and should concentrate on the ultimate truth, or the deity of his choice. He recognised that in the human society many customs, traditions and beliefs are not favourable to the

spiritual growth of man.Therefore he advocated that the individual should follow the universal teaching of the scripture and try to grasp the essence of truth which is embedded in every iota of nature. Swami Vivekananda has given total freedom to the devotee to choose his own path of realisation.

Inscrutable Thy ways;
So is my destiny inscrutable;
It is unknown; nor would wish to know.
Bhakti, Mukti, Japam, Tapas, all these;
Enjoyment, worship, and devotion too,...
I have expelled at Thy supreme command.*

Swami Vivekananda says that the absolute truth is that great power which is the source of all creation and life. All the living and non-living entities depend for their existence on the Primordial Shakti, addressed through different names. The divine shakti is the mother of creation. The symbol of shakti summarises the wisdom of the Indian civilisation. The divine shakti is the supreme symbol of reality which has found its way into the philosophical texts as well as into literature and fine arts in India, but also this supreme symbol has entered into the beliefs of the people in diverse ways. Swami Vivekanand affirms,

Oh, May the Mother of the universe, -
In whose activity, no respite rests;
Incessantly distributing the fruits
Of action done; guiding unceasingly
All action yet to come; - bestow Her boon
Of blessings on me, Her child, for e'ermore.
I realise, I know, that it is Thou;
Who holdest in Thy hands dread Karma's ropes.*

Swami Vivekananda has touched on all the fundamental aspects of human life and has taken into cognizance the conative, intellectual and emotional experiences. Human life is a mixture of pleasure and pain and one cannot escape the constraints of history. In spite of the predominant suffering in life, one is

expected to make the best use of it. Swami Vivekananda maintains that until the significance of life is not grasped the human being cannot know the essential truth which pervades everything in the world. The human being is the possessor of the Atman which is the ultimate truth. Accepting the postulates of Vedanta Swami Vivekananda clarifies that the joys and sorrows of life should be understood within the correct perspective without losing the mental equilibrium and faith in the spiritual order which pervades the universe. He has described the wonderful harmony and the order in the universe experienced through the sense faculties. Swami Vivekananda is not oblivious of the novel happenings and wondrous products in nature

Beaut'ous blossoms ravishing with perfume,
Swarms of maddened bees buzzing all around;
The silver moon - a shower of sweet smile,
Which all the dwellers of heaven above
Shed lavishly upon the homes of earth;
The soft Malaya breeze, whose magic touch
Opens to view distant memory's folds;"

He has also shown the deep strife and struggle in the world. Great wars have left many scars on human history. Mankind has suffered much under the domination of tyrants. He has drawn a clear picture of the battle-field and the senseless flow of human blood.

The martial music bursts, the trumpets blow,
The ground shakes under the warrior's tread,
The roar of cannon, the rattle of guns,
Volumes of smoke, the gruesome battle-field."

Swami Vivekananda has drawn the picture of the ideal person in his poem "A Hymn to the Divinity of Sri. Ramakrishna". He was totally devoted to his guru who was the combination of the highest virtues. Ramakrishna Paramhansa reflected the light of the divine and he was the model for all humanity to take inspiration from his life and thoughts. Swami Vivekananda has

paid the highest tributes to Ramakrishna Paramhansa and saw in him the infinite Atman.

O Sea of equality
In all! O verity, in Thee the pain
And evil of this mortal world escapes,
And vanishes, O cherished One, in Thee!"

He has pointed out that the individuals may have passed through different experiences and lived in superstition, misery or sin, yet they can hope to turn a new leaf in life with the dawn of faith." Swami Vivekananda has faith in the recovery of man even from the most hopeless situations. He has pointed out that the human being has the amazing power of resilience which will ultimately redeem him from the miseries of life.

that man alone
Is blest with power to fight and conquer hate
Transcending bounds and laws."

Swami Vivekananda's poetry reflects the mood of the renascent India. He saw the emergence of new vitality in every sphere of life in India. He inspired his countrymen to come out of the slumber and play a significant role in the world.

Be bold, and face
The Truth! Be one with it! Let visions cease,
Or, If you cannot, dream but truer dreams,
Which are Eternal Love and Service Free."

Swami Vivekananda points out that while sharing the burdens and responsibilities of life, the individual should not forget to realise his link with the divine power. One should follow the essence of the spiritual ideals, for such persons only are capable of guiding their fellow beings.

Though the good and wise in life are few,
Yet theirs are the reins to lead,
The masses know but late the worth;
Heed none and gently guide."

He has presented the tenets of Vedanta in several of his poems and stressed on the identity between the individual soul

and the Infinite Atman. The individual can realise his unity with the ultimate order says, Swami Vivekananda. His translation of Shankaracharya's poem shows his devotion to the tradition and teachings of Vedanta.

I am everything; I am the basis of the universe;
I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute,
Bliss Absolute;
I am He, I am He. (Shivoham, Shivoham).[5]

Swami Vivekananda has stressed on the need to wage a continuous battle against the evil forces and untruth. He has pointed out that human society contains few noble souls, who can only take the world in the right direction. That the noble persons should not hesitate to redeem their unfortunate brethren from the clutches of evil and ignorance is the message of Swami Vivekananda. The contributions of Swami Vivekananda to the Indian Renaissance is substantial. He wanted to see a strong and prosperous India vibrating with the spirit of dedication to spread the message of truth to the entire world. In fact he was the beacon light of spirituality and through him the pearls of wisdom hidden in the Indian heritage were introduced to the western world. He wanted the new India to consist of people who are against untruth and superstitions and ready to forge ahead in the modern world with firm faith in the path of action. His clarion call to his countrymen was to face the harsh realities of life with indomitable courage and faith in the all pervading spiritual reality. He affirms,

The One in All, give thee untiring
Strength, which is Infinite Love.[6]

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1. "To A Friend", The Complete Works of the Swami Vivekananda, Advaita Ashram, Mayavati, Almora, Vol. IV Himalayas, 1922, p. 429.
2. "The Hymn of Creation", op. cit., p. 430.
3. Ibid
4. Ibid
5. "Hymn of Samadhi", op. cit., p.431.
6. "A Hymn to Shiva", op., cit., p. 434.

7. "A Song I Sing to Thee", op. cit. p.445.
8. Ibid
9. "A Song I Sing to Thee", op. cit. p. 445.
10. "A Hymn to the Divine Mother", op. cit., p. 432
11. "And let Shyama Dance There", op. cit., pp. 439-440.
12. Ibid, p. 441.
13. "A Hymn to the Divinity of Sri Ramakrishna" op. cit., p.437.
14. "Angles Unawares", op. cit., p. 324.
15. Ibid
16. "To the Awakened India", op. cit., p.324.
17. "Hold on Yet a While, Brave Heart", op. cit., p. 325
18. "Nirvana Shatkam, or Six Stanzas on Nirvana" op., cit., p. 327.
19. "To The Awakened India", op., cit., p. 323.

■

If you cannot deliver your heart immediately to God, then at least do this; think of God at least for a moment during the twenty four hours of the day. Then every moment you will spend in the enjoyment of God's happiness, will be of help to you in taking your mind away from sense. As when the autumn sets in the river dwindles, similarly your mind will gradually go out of the bound of Samsara : and as, after the full-moon day, the disc of the moon diminishes every day, until it vanishes altogether on the new-moon day, similarly, as your heart will go out of the objects of sense and begin to enter into the Being of God, it will gradually end by becoming God.

- Gurudeo Ranade,
in Mysticism in Maharashtra, p. 115.

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COMPARATIVE RELIGION AND COMMUNAL HARMONY

Swami Vivekananda's View.

-Dr. Prof. V. N. Sheshagiri Rao

My paper has two parts. Part - I enquires into what comparative Religion is about. Part - II analyses the concept of harmony and how it could be achieved through the practice of Comparative Religion.

- I -

Comparative Religion is a study of different religions of the world and their contrasts and contexts. Juxtaposing the important traits of different religions is its remarkable feature. Comparative religion provides ample room for richness and abundance of ideas of all religions.

In India, teaching and research in comparative Religion has been a fast emerging phenomenon. It is a highly suggestive proposition. When it was thought that religion was the basis of all culture, Comparative religion emerged. It arose as a necessity of one person to understand the other and other's culture and values. It is interested in a grand synthesis of values, in each religion. It records lofty experiences of the awakened spirits of the world.

The main focus of comparative religion is on humanism.

It is the be-all and the end-all of comparative religion. In this sense comparative religion is anthropocentric. Its goal is to discover the universal human community. It is, in this sense that Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan said, "A new humanism is on the horizon.'

Pope said, "The noblest study of mankind is man himself." The upasisads say the same thing : "Know thyself" (Atmanam Viddhi). So said Confucius in China, "All thoughts and all theories of human activity are to be based upon a proper understanding of man". Thus, in comparative religion the emphasis is on man and his values.

- II -

Now, I shall come to second part of my paper viz. communal harmony.

Communal harmony is, of great necessity in any society, which is flooded with a plurality of religions, avers Swami Vivekananda. But how to reach this goal? Certainly not through platform lectures and parrot-like talks, not through bookish knowledge! The word 'religion' has been used and abused very much by all and sundry. But the mute question is : What is religion, in fact? Swami Vivekananda says : "Religion is not in doctrines, in dogmas, nor in intellectual argumentation; it is being and becoming, it is realisation".' Religion begins when something is realised. Religion is like space or air. No one can escape from it. Religion is a way of life, a life of values like non-injury (ahimsa)', truthfulness (satya)', sincerity, love etc. if the word 'god' is not acceptable to some, let us replace it by the word 'goodness' or 'humanity'. Religion has both a spiritual and worldly purpose to fulfil. Swami Vivekananda says, "Atmana moksharthain jagad hitaya' (for the salvation of the soul and for the welfare of the world).

The name of Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa the teacher of Vivekananda and the modern prophet of comparative religion is worth mentioning here. His parable of 'Pandit and boatsman'• is of great meaning.

The goal of communal harmony could be achieved through practice.• Sri Ramakrishna says that "All religions are but different Sadhana paths that take us to the same destination! All paths are needed. The essence of all religions is the same.' This fact, he realised, through the practice of essential tenets of different religions like Christianity, Islam etc. He was a practitioner of religion. He realised God as Jesus by practising the essential teaching of Christ. Similarly he realised God as Allah. His approach to religions was practical and mystical.Religions seem to be opposed to each other outwardly, in their details of certain forms, rituals etc. What is important is the kernel and not the outward formalities. So a distinction is to be drawn between inner religion and institutional religion. All religions are true. Sri Ramakrishna says that there are as many paths as there are faiths. Equal respect should be shown to every religion.• Since the essence of all religions is the same, that is humanism, all religions should be harmonised. Superiority of one religion over the other is not to be encouraged. No religion is mean, no religion is superior. Kindness, truth, helping nature, compassion , non-injury and love are the essence of every religion. Followers of one religion shold look after the followers of other religion with tender love and consideration with greatest faith and respect. Egoistic tendencies are to be shunned. There could be communal harmony when a person experiences his own soul as the soul of each creature and all souls as his own. Fanaticism and bigotry are to be ruthlessly removed. Persons should attain the state of oneness of existence where feelings of envy, fear, hatred and all other mean mentalities vanish. What we need is a band of workers, with comparative understanding of religions to work for communal

harmony and good of humanity."

Vivekananda is never tired of saying that "....religions have to broaden. Religious ideals will have to become universal, vast and infinite; and then alone we shall have the fullest play of religion...."[2] Further he continues : "what is needed is a fellow-feeling between the different types of religion, seeing that they all stand or fall together, a fellow feeling which springs from mutual esteem and mutual respect and not the condescending, patronising niggordly expression of goodwill, unfortunately in vogue at the present time with many"[3] Vivekananda says that when we come to the universal concept of religion as spiritual, then and then alone religion will become real and living; it will come to our very nature. We tend to live such a universal religion in our every moment.[4] Brotherhood already exists. God's book is not finished. It is a continuous revelation going on. Universal religion stands for peace and love; makes brotherhood of man more tangible. There is tremendous life-power in universal religion. It is not a mere play upon words. The practitioners of harmony of all religions have love and sympathy far all. They do and they live and do not talk much, says Vivekananda. Humanism is the thread that runs through all the pearls. And each pearl is a religion. Truth may be expressed in a hundred thousand ways, and that each of these ways is true as far as it goes, just as the same thing can be viewed from a hundred different standpoints. Vivekananda's practical plan for working out religions and communal harmony is the maxim, " DO NOT DESTROY; but BUILD ".

Notes and References :

1. **S. Radhakrishnan** : Eastern Religions and Western thought (Oxford University Press, London, 1940) p.vii.
2. **Swami Vivekananda** : Thought of Power (Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata, 1961), p. 19.
3. 'Ahimsa Paramo Dharmah" (non-injury is the highest duty).
4. "Satyannasti Paro Dharmah" (there is no dharma higher than truth).

5. **Swami Nikhilananda** (Sri Ramkrishna Math) The sayings of Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa.
6. Sri Ramakrishna went straight into the heart of religion. He had the direct realisation of God.
7. a) Water - tank having different steps etc.
b) The Rg vedic statement : 'Ekam Sat Viprah bahudha Vadanti'.
c) The Chandogya Sruti : 'Vacarambhanam Vikaro namadheyam, mrttiket eva satyam'.
8. "If there is God, we must see Him, if there is Soul, we must perceive it" (**Vivekananda** : Thoughts of Power, p. 19.
9. Sarvadharma Samanatva and Sarvadharma Samanuaya should be chanted and practised through spiritual discipline. Vivekananda addresses Sri Ramakrishna as Sarvadharma Svarupini- the embodiment of all dharmas. Sri Ramakrishna practised and attained the highest goal. In him, we find the fullest manifestation of the harmony of all religions.
10. **Swami Vivekananda** : Jnana-Yoga (Advaita Ashram, Kolkata, 1970), p.17.
11. Ibid, p.18
12. Ibid, p.18

-Dr. Prof. **V. N. Sheshagiri Rao,**
Head, Deptt. of Philosophy, Mysore University.

■

" ... The great Kannada Mystics evidently ramify themselves into two schools. - Shaivite and Vaishnavite... My problem is to deal only with their common spiritual experiences and not with their dogmatic differences and what they have contributed to the development of mystic thought in general."[1]

" The Karnatak Mystics hold a very high position among the mystics of the world and they have contributed a good deal to the world's mystical thought."[1]

- Gurudeo Ranade
in Pathway to God in Kannada Literature, [1] p.6 & [1] p. 11.

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Arrival of a Messiah Vivekananda

Achyut Vadavi

During nineteenth Century, Bengal (Undivided) was in a turmoil. Indians were defeated in the first war of independence (1857) British East India Company handed over the country to British Crown, English and Science education was started on a large scale, Christian missionaries started preaching Christianity and denouncing ritualistic and idol worshipping Hindu Religion. The sharp and intellectual Bengalis wanted to know the reason for every Hindu ritual and when they could not find satisfactory answers, they formed a new group colled Brahmo Samaj, under the leadership of Great reformist Raja Ram Mohun Roy. After Roy, Rabindranath Tagore's grand father Dwarakanath became the head of the Brahmo Church. He was followed by his saintly son Devendranath and then by Keshub Chandra Sen, a great intellectual. When Narendranath Dutta i.e. Vivekananda was young, Keshub in Bramo Samaj and Ramakrishna in Hindu Society were the prominent figures. While Keshub was a well educated, well read, articulate and anglicized person, Rama Krishna was an illiterate, with faltering speech, scarcely clad, idol worshipping, emotional person.

In this scenario was born Narendranath to an aristocratic Kshatriya family of Calcutta, then capital of India, on 12th Jan 1863. Mother was very well educated and father, who believed in the welfare of whole humanity, was a carefree person. Narendra had multiplicity of talents and he cultivated them all. He had beautiful looks, looked strong like a lion, well-built body with physical courage, past master in physical

exercises like boxing, swimming, horse riding, rowing etc. He danced to the tune of religious songs with consummate art. He was a favourite of the youth, the arbiter of fashion, had a delightful voice had studied vocal and instrumental music. In his studies he embraced science, astronomy, Maths, Philosophy, Sanskrit, world languages and History too. He was fired by French Revolution and the personality of Napolean. He read 'Imitation of Jesus Christ' and Vedanta with ease. He was a past master in practical meditation. When in college, he wrote an essay on the science and philosophy of Indian Music and thereby was distinguished for his brilliant intellect. He had a mania for arguments which was more for acquiring the basic truth of a subject than for winning bout. He had the ability of critic's discrimination, a religious soul and absolute purity both in words and deeds. He imposed upon himself a rigorous chastity so much so that he would not walk on the theatre side of a road. Behind all this, the reason was he had an inkling that he had a great job to perform but did not know what it was. By the time he was appearing for his first University examination (Matriculation) in 1880 he set his foot in an intellectual dilemma. First he sought guidance from a friend, who it turned out, had his own philosophy other than the ones in practice. As was the case with most of the English educated youth of those days, he joined Brahmo Samaj which also could not give him internal satisfaction and he was in an intellectual crisis till 1884.

His father suddenly died by heart attack in 1884 leaving behind huge debt and large number of debtors. He walked from office to office but could not find a job. He was ready to fast but could not tolerate the family members starving.

His external sense were extinguished, body become cold, mind became very light and happy. After awakening, he came to R.K. and told this experience.

In 1880 Narendra sang a beautiful religious hymn in a function in a friend's house, which was attended by Ramkrishna (R.K.) also. The latter asked Narendra to come to Dakshineshwar. Narendra went there with a group of friends, R.K. called him alone into a room and told him 'you are puranic Sage Nara, incarnation of Narayana and have returned on earth to take away the misery of humanity. Promise to come again alone'
Narendra thought R.K. was a monomaniac but is worthy of respect. He returned alone to Dakshineshwar after a month. While sitting on R.K.'s bed, R.K. placed his right foot on Narendra's body. The contact was terrible. He saw walls and everything in the room whirling and vanishing into nothingness.... He felt he was facing death, so shouted 'What are you doing? I have parents at home', R.K. laughed,passed his hand on Naren's (Narendra was called by R.K. as Naren) breast & said let us leave it now'. Immediately everything became normal.
A week later Naren went for the third time. R.K. went into a trance and touched the former, who lost all outward consciousness. After sometime Naren became normal and saw R.K. stroking his chest. R.K. told his other disciples, 'I asked him about his mission in life and he gave satisfactory answer'. When time comes he will give up his body by an act of will'.
Thereafter Naren's visits were more often. He told R.K. "Even if millions of men called you God, if I had not proved it for myself, I would not do so" R.K. told his desciples "Do not accept anything because I say so- Test everything for yourself". Naren to R.K." How do you know that your realizations are not the creations of your sick brain, mere hallucinations? R.K. meditated for a minute. Mother (Kali) told R.K. 'Patience, soon Naren's eyes will be opened.'
On another occasion Naren told R.K. "I do not desire God. I desire peace that is to say absolute truth, absolute knowledge, absolute infinitude". Thereafter Naren did not come

to R.K. for a long time. The latter went to see him during a Brahmo meeting and got rebuked by Naren. Then R.K. stopped seeing him but Naren went to him. R.K. did not pay any attention to Naren. After some more visits Naren and his friends came to Dakshineshwar and were joking that this water jug is god, this fly is god etc. R. K. came in and touched Naren who immediately started seeing God in everything. It continued for 12 days during which period he was always saying Shiva... Shiva.

After father's death in 1884 when he was in great financial bankruptcy, Naren prayed God intensely. Still nothing happened. He became an atheist and decided to renounce the world on a particular day. That day R.K. came to Calcutta, met Naren and called him to Dakshineshwar. There, R.K. to Naren "I know you cannot stay in this world. But for my sake stay in it as long as I am alive". Naren to R.K. – "Please pray for me" R.K.- "Why don't you do it yourself?" Naren went in twice and forgot to ask anything. Third time he went in and said. "I need nothing save to know and to believe".

From that day his life became new.

After some days Naren requested R.K. to teach him Nirvikalp Samadhi. Which the latter refused. One day Naren was wandering in a garden and suddenly he got Samadhi.
R.K. "Keep it under lock and key. You have Mother's work to do. When it is finished she will unlock it."
Naren "I want to be in that happy state all the time".
R.K. shouted – "For shame. How can you ask such things?.... you want to stay in personal joy like an ordinary man? This realization will become so natural to you by the grace of the Mother that in your normal state you will realize the one divinity in all beings. You will do great things in the world. You will bring spiritual consciousness to men and assuage the misery of the humble and the poor".

Naren thought in his mind "Outwardly he is Bhakta but inwardly he is a Jnani. I am the exact opposite".
In 1884 R.K's health suddenly took serious turn. In April 1885 he got throat cancer in September desciples moved him to Calcutta for regular treatment. In March 1886 he ordained all his disciples as Sanyasis.

Three or four days before his death he called Naren and asked to be left alone with him, he looked lovingly at him and passed into ecstasy. It enveloped Naren in its fold. When he came back from the shadows he saw R.K. in tears. The master said to him 'Today, I have given you my all and now am only a poor fakir, possessing nothing. By this power you will do immense good in the world and not until it is accomplished will you return". On 16• August 1886 just before noon R.K. breathed his last. In his last days he had, in the presence of all of his disciples, told Naren to look after all of them. So thereafter Naren took up that responsibility.

New group of R.K.'s disciples was formed on 25• December that year at Bara-Nagore. Naren read the philosophies of all the religions and civilizations to the group and led them indefatiguably towards the wide horizons of boundless truth, which surpass all the limits of schools and races embrace and unify all particular truths. He remained in Bara-Nagore upto 1888. There after wandered for two and half years with a colleague. At this time he was in touch with Bara-Nagore and came back whenever he was called.

He thought of synthesis of Hindu faith and modern science. A strong Karmic Force was working upon him in Bara-Nagore only. But he did not know its direction. At Varanasi it become clear to him and he said 'I am going away but I shall never come back until I can burst on the society like a bomb and make it follow me like a (pet) dog.

In April 1891, when he was sitting in the court of Maharaja of Khetri a little danseuse came for dancing. Naren got up to leave, the prince begged him to remain. She sang a song which said.

'Oh Lord, look not upon my evil qualities. Oh Lord thy name is same-sightedness. Make of us both the same Brahman. One piece of iron is God in the temple and the other is the knife in the hands of butcher. But when they touch philosopher's stone both alike turn into gold. So, lord look not upon my evil qualities. Thy name is same-sightedness.

One drop of water is in the sacred Jamuna and another is foul in the ditch by the roadside. But when they fall into the Ganga both alike become holy. So Lord do not look upon my evil qualities. Thy name is same-sightedness.' Naren was completely over whelmed. The confident faith expressed in the humble song affected him for life. Thereafter prejudices disappeared. One more experience added to the broadening of his views. In the Himalayas he stayed with a Tibetan Family of six brothers who had one wife. He told them it was immoral. They replied 'What immoral? Selfishness to keep one woman all for oneself is moral?" He realized the truth at the bottom of the mountain and error at the top. He understood the wisdom in traditions, of different races in different ages. Thereafter he kept company with thieves of the lowest class and came to recognize even in highway robbers 'sinners who were potential saints'. In his lonely tour of India he lived with a family of outcast sweepers. Amid such lowly people, who came at the feet of the society, he found spiritual treasures, while their miseries choked him. There he remembered R.K.'s words "Religion is not for empty bellies". He gave his quest for upliftment of his personal soul but made it a first duty of religion 'to care for the poor and raise them'. At Cape Comorin he dedicated his whole life for it. In 1892 he came to know about the meeting of world parliament of religions in Chicago, U.S.A. By the end of the year he decided to

attend it and barter the Indian Philosophical thought for the aid to uplift the Indian poor by rich Americans. He saw the path he was to follow.

His mission was chosen.

His thoughts at this juncture were crystal clear. He wanted that science and religion should make a seamless joint and all the sections of the people should be benefitted by that. He believed in one and only God the sum total of all souls and above all his God the wicked, god the afflicted, God the poor of all races. He loved multiplicity of religions as it encourages creativity for the benefit of humanity. He expressed that let there be as many religion as there are human beings, but each religion should absorb the good themes and practices of other religions viz Spirituality from Hinduism, Moral Purity from chirstianity and social equality from Islam etc.

In January 1893 he announced in Chennai his decision to attend the world parliament and collected donations only from the middle class. The Maharaja of Khetri gave him the Royal looking robe of red silk and ochre turban and also the name Vivekananda.

Religious mentality of the U.S. in nineteenth century was a mixture of Angol-Saxon Puritanism, Yankee Optimism of action, Pragmatism, Scienticism and Pseudo-Vedantism. Emerson introduced vedantism through his publication 'Journal' to a large number of people. Emerson was introduced to this aspect of Philosophy by Thoreau, through his book 'A week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers and also personal discussions. Two other authors who held similar views were David Whitman and and Edgar Allen Poe. While Whitman had no contact with Indian literature on the subject but expressed similar thoughts in his book 'Leaves of Grass', Poe is likely to have picked up these thoughts in Russia and has expressed them in his book 'Eureka'.

Thus the subject of Vedanta and its thoughts were not absolutely new to America when Vivekananda visited it. The ground had already been broken and seeds had been sown, though sparingly.

In USA Vivekananda faced many obstacles regarding finance and procedures. These were however solved by kind hearted people. Ultimately he attended the conference and was asked to speak as a last man in the session on 19th September 1894.

Vivekananda's reputation had already spread to America and people were eager to hear him speak. On the prescribed day all the speakers spoke of the lofty ideals of their faith in high flown languge and from a pulpit which they tried to show was much above the level of the audience. While the speakers were basking in the glory of their speeches, the audience was feeling neglected, suffocated and scorched. At this time, Vivekananda got up and started in his sweet musical voice with words which embraced the audience with warmth and affection.

'My sisters and brothers of America...' These words were like a cool shower in the scorching sun and the audience was so enraptured that they got up as one man and started clapping for a long time.

The Messiah had arrived in America.

-Achyut Vadavi,
Cell : 97407 48554 Ph.0831-2431320

■

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA's CHICAGO ADDRESS

Response to welcome At the World's Parliament of Religions
11th September, 1893.

Sisters and Brothers of America,

It fills my heart with joy unspeakable to rise in response to the warm and cordial welcome which you have given us. I thank you in the name of the most ancient order of monks in the world; I thank you in the name of the millions and millions of Hindu people of all classes and sects.

My thank also to some of the speakers on this platform who, referring to the delegates from the Orient, have told you that these men from far-off nations may well claim the honour of bearing to different lands the idea of toleration. I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth. I am proud to tell you that we have gathered in our bosom the purest remnant of the Israelites, who came to Southern India and took refuge with us in the very year in which their holy temple was shattered to pieces by Roman tyranny. I am proud to belong to the religion which has sheltered and is still fostering the remnant of the grand Zoroastrian nation. I will quote to you, Breth-

ren a few lines from a hymn which I remember to have repeated from my earliest boyhood, which is every day repeated by millions of human beings : "As the different steams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or sraight, all lead to Thee."

The present convention, which is one of the most august assemblies ever held, is in itself a vindication, a declaration to the world of the wonderful doctrine preached in the Gita : "Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me". Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilisation, and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now. But their time is come; and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death knell of all fanaticism of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal. ■

Forgiveness if weak & passive, is not good; fight is better. Forgive when you can bring legions of angels to an easy victory. The emancipation of Bharat was possible only through the blending of Jagadguru Adya Shankaracharya's intellect and Lord Buddha's great Compassion. It is against the big tree that the great wind strikes. When the storm of sorrow blows all around and it seems, light will be seen no more, when hope & courage are almost gone, it is then, in the midst of this great spiritual tempest, that the "Light of the Supreme within gleams".

Swami Vivekananda.

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SYMBOLS IN RELIGION

-SWAMI VIVEKANAND

Bhakti is divided into two portions. One in called Vaidhi, formal or cere; the other portion is called Mukhya, supreme. The word Bhakti covers all the ground between the lowest form of worship and the highest form of life. All the worship that you have seen in any country in the world, or in any religion, is regulated by love. There is a good deal that is simple ceremony; there is also a good deal which, though not ceremony, is still not love, but a lower state. Yes, these ceremonies are necessary. The external part of Bhakti is absolutely necessary to help the soul onward. Man makes a great mistake when he thinks that he can at once jump to the highest state. If a baby thinks he is going to be an old man in a day, he is mistaken, and I hope you will always bear in mind this one ideal, that religion is neither in books, nor in intellectual consent, nor in reasoning. Reason, theories, documents, doctrines, books, religious ceremonies, are all helps to religion - religion itself consists of realisation.

We all say, "There is a God." Have you seen God? That is the question. You hear a man say, "There is God in heaven." You ask him if he has seen Him, and if he says he has, you would laugh at him, and say he is a maniac. With most people religion is a sort of intellectual assent and goes no further than a document. I would not call it religion. It is better to be an atheist

than to have that sort of religion. Religion does not depend on our intellectual assent, or dissent. You say there is a soul. Have you seen the soul? How is it we all have souls and do not see them? You have to answer the question, and find out the way to see the soul. If not, it is useless to talk of religion. If any religion is true it must be able to show us the soul, to show us God and the truth in ourselves. If you and I fight for all eternity about one of these doctrines or documents we shall never come to any conclusion.

People have been fighting for ages, and what is the outcome ? Intellect cannot reach there at all. We have to go beyond the intellect; the proof of religion is in direct perception. The proof of the existence of this wall is that we see it; if you sat down and argued about its existence or non-existence for ages, you couldnever come to any conclusion, but directly you see it, it is enough. If all the men in the world told you it did not exist, you would not believe them, because you know that the evidence of your own eyes is superior to that of all the doctrines and documents in the world.

To be religious, you have first to throw books overboard. The less you read of books the better for you; do one thing at a time. It is a tendency in Western countries, in these modern times, to make a hotchpotch of the brain; all sorts of unassimilated ideas run roit in the brain, and form a chaos, without ever obtaining a chance to settle down and crystallise into a definite shape. In many cases it becomes a sort of disease, but this is not religion. Then some want a sensation. Tell them about ghosts, and people coming from the North Pole or any other remote place, with wings or any other form, and that they are invisibly present and watching over them, and make them feel uncanny. Then they are satisfied and go home, but within twenty-fours hours they are ready for a fresh sensation. This is what some call religion. This is the way to the

lunatic asylum, and not to religion. The Lord is not to be reached by the weak, and all these weird things tend to weakness. Therefore go not near them; they only make people weak, bring disorder to the brain, weaken the mind, demoralise the soul, and a hopeless muddle is the result.

You must bear in mind that religion does not consist in talk, or doctrines, or books but in realisation; it is not learning, but being. Everybody knows "Do not steal," but what of it? That man has really known, who has not stolen. Everybody knows "Do not injure others," but of what value is it? Those who have done so have realised it they know it, and have built their character on it. Religion is realising, and I will call you a worshipper of God, when you have become able to realise the idea. Before that it is the spelling of the word, and no more. It is this power of realisation that makes religion. No amount of doctrines or philosophies or ethical books that you may have stuffed into your brain will matter much, only what you are, and what you have realised. So we have to realise religion, and this realisation of religion is a long process. When men hear of something very high and wonderful they all think they will get that, and never stop for a moment to consider that they will have to work their way up to it; they - all want to jump there. If it is the highest, we are for it. We never stop to consider whether we have the power, and the result is that we do not do anything. You cannot take a man with a pitchfork and push him up there; we all have to work up gradually. Therefore, the first part of religion is Vaidhi Bhakti, the lower phase of worship. What are these lower phases of worship? They are various. In order to attain to the state where we can realise, we must pass through the concrete, just as you see children learn through the concrete first, and gradually come to the abstract. If you tell a baby that five times two is ten, it will not understand, but if you bring ten things and show how five times two is ten it will understand. Religion is a long, slow process. We are all of us

babies here; we may be old, and have studied all the books in the universe, but we are all spiritual babies. We have learnt the doctrines and dogmas, but realised nothing in our lives. We shall have to begin now in the concrete, through forms and words, prayers and ceremonies, and of these concrete forms there will be thousands; one form need not be for everybody. Some may be helped by images, some may not. Some require an image outside, others one inside the brain. The man who puts it inside says, "I am a superior man; when it is inside it is all right; when it is outside it is idolatry, I will fight it." When a man puts an image in the form of a church or temple he thinks it is holy, but when it is in a human form he objects to it!

So there are various forms through which the mind will take this concrete exercise, and then, step by step, we shall come to the abstract understanding, abstract realisation. Again, the same form is not for everyone; there is one form that will suit you, and another will suit somebody else, and so on. All forms, though leading to the same goal, may not be for all of us. Here is another mistake we generally make. My ideal does not suit you, and why should I force it on you ? My fashion of building churches or reading hymns does not suit you; why should I force it on you ? Go into the world and every fool will tell you that his form is the only right one, that every other form is diabolical, and he is the only chosen man ever born in the universe. But in fact, all these forms are good and helpful. Just as there are certain varieties in human nature, so it is necessary that there should be an equal number of forms in religion and the more there are, the better for wprld. If there are twenty forms of religion in the world, it is very good, if there are four hundred so much the better, there will be the more to choose from. So we should rather be glad when the number of religions and religious ideas increase and multiply; because they will then include every man, and help mankind more. Would to God that religions multiplied until every man had his own

religion, quite separate from that of any other ! This is the idea of the Bhakti-Yogi.

The final idea is that my religion cannot be yours, or yours mine. Although the goal and the aim are the same, yet each one has to take a different road, according to the tendencies of his mind, and although these roads are various they must all be true, because they lead to the same goal. It cannot be that one is true and the rest not. The choosing of one's own road is called in the language of Bhakti, Ishtam, the chosen way.-

Then there are words. All of you have heard of the power of words, how wonderful they are! Every book - the Bible, the Koran, and the Vedas - is full of the power of words. Certain words have wonderful power over mankind. Again, there are other forms, known as symbols. Symbols have great influence on the human mind. But great symbols in religion were not created indefinitely. We find that they are the natural expressions of thought. We think symbolically. All our words are but symbols of the thought behind, and different people have come to use different symbols without knowing the reason why. It was all behind, and these symbols are associated with the thoughts, and as the thought brings the symbols outside, so the symbols on the contrary, can bring the thought inside, So one portion of Bhakti tells about these various subjects of symbols and words and prayers. Every religion has prayers, but one thing you must bear in mind- praying for health or wealth is not Bhakti. It is all Karma, or meritorious action. Praying for
any physical gain is simply Karma, such as a prayer for going to heaven and so forth. One that wants to live God to be a Bhakta, must discard all such prayers. He who wants to enter the realms of light must first give up this buying and selling, this "shopkeeping" religion, and then enter the gates. It is not that you do not get what you pray for; you get everything, but such praying is a beggar's religion. "Foolish indeed is he who,

living on the banks of the Ganges digs a little well for water. A fool indeed is the man who, coming to a mine of diamonds, seeks for glass beads." This body will die some time, so what is the use of praying for its health again and again? What is there in health and wealth? The wealthiest man can use and enjoy only a little portion of his wealth. We can never get all the things of this world, and if not, who cares? This body will go, who cares for these things? If good things come, welcome; if they go away, welcome, let them go. Blessed are they when they come, and blessed are they when they go. We are striving to come into the presence of the King of kings. We cannot get there in a begger's dress. Even if we wanted to enter the presence of an emperor, should we be admitted? Certainly not. We should be driven out. This is the Emperor of emperors, and in these begger's rags we cannot enter. Shopkeepers never have admission there; buying and selling have no place there. As you read in the Bible, Jesus drove the buyers and sellers out of the Temple. Do not pray for little things. If you seek only bodily comforts, where is the difference between men and animals? Think yourselves a little higher than that.

So it goes without saying, that the first task in becoming a Bhakta is to give up all desires of heaven and other things. The question is how to get rid of these desires. What makes men miserable? Because they are slaves, bound by laws, puppets in the hand of nature, tumbled about like playthings. We are continually taking care of this body that anything can knock down, and so we are living in a constant state of fear. I have read that a dear has to run on the average sixty or seventy miles every day because it is frightened. We ought to know that we are in a worse plight than the deer. The deer has some rest, but we have none. If the deer gets grass enough it is satisfied, but we are always multiplying our wants. It is a morbid desire with us to multiply our wants. We have become so unhinged and unnatural that nothing natural will satisfy us. We are always grasp

ing after morbid things, must have unnatural excitement, unnatural food, drink, surroundings and life. As to fear, what are our lives but bundles of fear? The deer has only one class of fear, such as that from tigers, wolves,etc. Man has the whole universe to fear.

How are we to free ourselves from this is the question. Utilitarians say, "Don't talk of God and hereafter; we don't know anything of these things, let us live happily in this world." I would be the first to do so if we could, but the world will not allow us. As long as you are a slave of nature how can you? The more you struggle the more enveloped you become. You have been devising plans to make you happy, I do not know for how many years, but each year things seem to grow worse. Two hundred years ago in the old world people had few wants, but if their knowledge increased in arithmetical progression, their wants increased in geometrical progression. We think that in salvation at least our desires will be fulfilled, so we desire to go to heaven. This eternal, unquenchable thirst! Always wanting something! When a man is a beggar he wants money. When he has money, he wants other things, society,and after that, something else. Never at rest. How are we to quench this? If we get to heaven it will only increase desire. If a poor man gets rich it does not quench his desires, it is only like throwing butter on the fire, increasing its bright flames. Going to heaven means becoming intensely richer, and then desire comes more and more. We read of many human things in heaven in the different Bibles of the world; they are not always very good there; and after all,this desire to go to heaven is a desire after enjoyment. This has to be given up. It is too little, too vulgar a thing for you to think of going to heaven. It is just the same as thinking, I will become a millionaire and lord it over people. There are many of these heavens, but through them you cannot gain the right to enter the gates of religion and love.

■

VIVEKANANDA - DYNAMICS FOR YOUTHS

-V. G. Andurkar

Jan. 12, 1863, Calcutta at 6:49, Monday, few minutes later to sunrise; Narendra globally known as VIVEKANANDA was born, a day of great Hindu festival 'Makar Sankranti'- mark of revolution! An occasion when millions of devotees were offering their special prayers and worships to the holy river Ganges. Vivekananda's first breath effected from the Ganges air reverberating with religious music, chanting of mantras by thousands of Hindu men and women.

Bhuvaneshwari Devi - pious mother of Vivekananda - when carrying him in her womb had requested her Banaras based relative to offer special worship to Lord Vireshwara Shiva and named him Vireshwara on his birth. He was also known as Narendra. Bhuvaneshwari being regal in appearance, gracious in conduct and deeply religious was blessed with the virtuest son.

Vishwanath Datta - the father an attorney-at-law of High Court, Calcutta, had mastered English and Persian literature. Datta family was financially sound, respected, renowned for charity and strong spirit of 'Independence'.

Narendra in childhood was given to fun and frolic but at the same time had a great attraction towards spiritualism. At 5, he was experiencing a strange phenomenon viz. while sleeping could see a ball of light with changing colours. He was unaware of this vision of a great past and inborn habit of medi-

tation.

The stories of 'Ramayana' and 'Mahabharata' narrated by his mother inspired in him courage, sympathy for poor and respect towards wandering monks. These qualities of head and heart grew him into a vigorous youth.

Young Narendra possessed Leonine features, courage, athelete built, brilliant intellect and resonant voice as well. These exceptional qualities kept him an undisputed leader among the friends.

He was a voracious reader which made him perfect while self-confidence accurate. When 16, Narendra graduated himself in first division. In 1879 he entered Presidency College, Calcutta for higher studies and after a year joined Institute of General Assembly. There this agile, muscular and handsome youth enjoyed the depth of knowledge.

Vivekananda's inherent tendancy for spiritualism and great respect for ancient Hindu traditions on one side and his argumentative nature coupled with sharp intellect on the other were at war. He tried to find comfort through 'Brahmo Samaj" - the popular socio-religious movement of the time.

He remains unanswered to his question about the existence of God, inspite of meeting famous social - reformers, making him spiritually restless. At this critical juncture, he remembered the words of Prof. Hastie who referred to Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa as a great Saint living in Dakshineshwar.

The historic meeting of these two great souls came about 1871. The first question asked by Naren was, "Sir, have you seen God?". The reply was given, "Yes, I have seen God, I can

see him as I see you, even more clearer". His doubts were dispelled and thus disciple's study begun. It was a remarkable time as the intense spirit imbibed in Vivekananda. One day he asked Ramkrishna that he could be blessed with 'Nirvikara Samadhi. Obviously master's disinclination indicated the real purpose of not going to 'Nirvikara Samadhi'. Ramkrishna inducted what is normally called as 'Shakti-Pat' in Swami Vivekananda with a paramount pleasure and hoped of his contribution to the world. With the Master's passing away in 1886, Vivekananda's life got altogether a different turn. He travelled throughout India and gained vast experience.

Maharaja of Khetri helped Vivekananda in every possible way for the voyage of America to attend the "Parliament of Religions" in 1893. He was welcomed in USA with the news about the postponement of said Parliament. Meanwhile he went to Boston, Boston being less expensive and stayed there for a few days waiting for the opportunity. Prof. Wright of Harvard University gave him an introductory letter to the Chairman of Parliament of Religions. The said letter alas!! was lost unfortunately creating not only money problems but also many problems and deprived him of the desired goal. Ultimately Mrs. Hale's help gave him an entry in the Parliament.

It was 11th September 1893, the memorable day for human race, when the world knew Swami Vivekananda's true religious thinking covering all religions of the globe. The Chicago Art Institute was packed exceeding 7,000 people. When Vivekananda's turn came he mentally bowed to Saraswati, the Goddess of learning and began with his fluent voice and noble personality with words, "My Sisters and Brothers of America". Immediately there was a thunderous applause from the vast audience which lasted for more than two complete minutes. His speech was short and distinct pleading the universal tolerance and stressing the common basis of Religions.

To choose best amongst the best is interesting, particularly Vivekananda's teaching. His teachings on Education, Duty, Man, God speak of the eminent role played by him for human welfare. He says Education is the manifestation of perfection which is already present in the man. The real education according to him is one which enables to stand on one's own legs. His impressions about duty are, "our first duty is not to hate ourselves and one who has not faith in oneself can never have faith in God. Duty is an action that takes us Godwards. Every duty is holy and devotion to dury is the highest worship of God". Swamiji says "Man is an infinite circle whose centre is located at one point and God is an infinite circle whose centre is located anywhere". Further he says, "A hundred thousand men and women, fired with the zeal of holiness, fortified with the eternal faith in the Lord and nerved to the lion's courage, by their sympathy for the poor and down-trodden will go over the length and breadth of the earth, preaching the gospel of salvation, the gospel of help, the gospel of social rising, the gospel of equality".

The above teachings of Vivekananda are extremely useful in the present context of individuals, society, nations and world. The greater gap between the developed and underdeveloped countries can be narrowed down by means of implementation of his teachings. This will help for upliftment of human race. The teachings of Vivekananda have been appreciated by Shri Gurudeo Ranade in nutshell under the title - Moral life - "Good is that which contributes to realisation of infinite and that which does not so contribute is evil".

In recognition of this spirit alone Shri Sarvapally Radhakrishnan appeared keen for founding the 'Academy of Comparative Philosophy and Religion'.

Above mentioned teachings of Vivekananda are to be borne

in mind by the neo-youths with complete spirit of the call given by him -

"Arise, Awake and Stop not till the goal is reached". Hence according to me the spirit and teachings of Vivekananda will keep the modern society stable spiritually and ethically enabling to avail the advantages of modern science by way of achieving the excellence of spiritualism to attain overall PROSPERITY.

■

Swami Vivekananda on Concentration :
How has all the knowledge in the world been gained but by the concentration of the powers of the mind? The world is ready to give up its secrets if we only know how to knock, how to give it the necessary blow. The strength and force of the blow come through concentration. There is no limit to the power of human mind. The more concentrated it is, the more power is brought to bear on one point; that is the secret.

Herein is the difference between man and the animals - man has the greater power of concentration. The difference in their power of concentration also constitutes the difference between man and man. Compare the lowest with the highest man. The difference is in the degree of concentration. This is the only difference.

How are we to know that the mind has become concentrated? The more time passes unnoticed the more concentrated we are. In common life we see that when we are interested in a book we do not note the time at all; and when we leave the book, we are often surprised to find how many hours have passed.

THOUGHTS ON SWAMI VIVEKANAND BY A STUDENT

-Vidwan Shrikant Bhat

Swami Vivekanand is an ocean of Satchidananda. He is the sun giving strength to the sleepy and the weak. His leonine roar of Vedanta, "Awake, Arise & stop not till the goal is reached" appeals to the younger in heart.

His search for God & Guru was wonderfully discriminative. He asked the direct question, "Have you seen God?" Everyone failed to answer except Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa. His answer " I see God as clearly as I see you and will show the same to you" convinced Swami Vivekananda and ended his search for God. He made Ramakrishna Paramhansa his Guru. Vivek, the power of discrimination & Anand, the resulting Bliss is implied in his name Vivek-Ananda, Vivekananda.

But there is a vast difference between today and days of Swamiji. We find 'Aviveka' everywhere and indiscriminative men and women searching for happiness in the outer world. Their search has to end in failure, as the source of joy and happiness is inside oneself in the 'Atma-Tatva' and not in the outside world. Man is charmed by the gift of God namely His creation of the world, the human beings animals and nature. Forgetting God, man tries to play with this gift of God, like a child playing with the toys. But when hunger, trouble, misery, sadness etc. attack him, he cries like a child crying for its mother. It proves to be the first step of his search for the supreme goal.

So, Vivekanand beats the drum of Vedanta making everybody aware of the supreme goal. He says 'give up', 'give up', don't dream of happiness in temporary things, cultivate renunciation, which loosens the cords of Maya that is ignorance.

His Vedanta of "give up" is not negligence of duty but activating the dynamo of action seeing in everything the presence of God.

When one sees God in everything, the charming beauty of opposite sex will not attract him. He will praise the artistic creation of God as "Satyam Shivam Sundaram", hiding in every substance. Vivekanand filtered the Truth manifested in every religion in his sayings. एकंसतविप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति. The sages call the one by many names. This is explained by him in the famous world religious conference in America. He beautifully stated that Dwaita, Vishistadvaita and Advaita are the three steps to God realisation. In the initial stages, the sadhaka finds himself different from God, as his Sadhana deepens, he passes through the vishistadvaita and in Nirvikalpa Samadhi, he sees God in himself i.e. Advaita. So, the most conflicting doubts in Vedanta are cleared by the great intellect and Viveka of Swamiji. The famous Upanishadic prayer "Lead from darkness to light and from death to immortality is stated by him in other words as "Arise, Awake and stop not till the goal is reached". Vivekanand is friend of all. His nature is Love. He is father and mother of the poor. He added दरिद्रदेवोभव to the prayer मातृदेवो भव, पितृदेवो भव, आचार्य देवो भव, आतिथी देवो भव.

He says God is very easily found in the poor, hungry creatures. So serve them and feed them. This is the greatest worship to the Omnipresent, Omnipotent God. He significantly says 'First feed the hungry stomach, then give rich dishes of Vedanta.' Vedanta to the empty stomach is like poison, according to him.

He said, "A good servant will become a good master". First serve and then guide. This is the sternest and tersest advice to the so called political leaders who talk and talk but give no service to the common man in our country.

Vivekanand warns that one should not go begging for money to the rich people. They are themselves the worst beggers in the clutches of कामिनी and कांचनम i.e. sex & wealth and are useless to the world.

Vivekanand teaches the education of Atmavikas. He tells us to depend on our inner Atma, which is source of joy and happiness and is the base of everything in the world. Never think you are weak; never think you are bad; think always that you are the great child of God. Vivekananda's theory of self-reliance is very great and useful in this age of unemployment and population explosion. The nama-japa of Vivekanand, Vivekanand will bring out the current of will power from our inner Atma. The dawn of Swamiji is truely a blessing of God. The balance of Yoga of Karma, Jnana, Dhyana and Bhakti glorifies Swamiji's writings.

Vivekananda's presence is found in every human being. Even a robber is told by inner Viveka that robbing is bad and it will push him to jail and thus don't suffer by committing adharma. But his mind neglects the inner voice and his aviveka pulls his soul down to suffer and loses ananda. So Vivekanand dwells in every heart as Geeta tells "Ishwara Sarvabhooteshu Hriddeshe Arjun Tishthati".

If we give any pocja donation to God, we are giving back to God, what he himself has created. What we can give to God is our ego. Therefore, Vivekanand warns again and again that don't attach yourself to anything but live like a lotus leaf in water, which can never moisten it. पदमपत्रमिवाम्भसि.

Education, according to Swamiji, should be all round development of Body, Mind and Soul. Education should not lead to self-suicide but Self-Realisation. Today's scientific method of education neglects the importance of moral lessons to students. So called graduates are nothing but BAD (Bachelors of Arts degrees) and MAD (Master of Arts degrees). These degrees make a graduate gloomy, sad & insecure about his future. This is mainly because he was not taught how to face his life; how to live in joy / how to solve his problem. The answer is only possible by following the ancient method of self realisation process of education through Yoga, Dhyan & Seva. Swami Vivekanand firmly asks for replacement of the present totally materialistic education by a mixture of Divine and materialistic method of education.

- Vidwan Shrikant Bhat,
Kilar, Siddapur, N. K.

■

Concentration is the essence of all Knowledge; nothing can be done without it. Ninety per cent of thought force is wasted by the ordinary human being, and therefore he is constantly committing blunders; the trained man or mind never makes a mistake.

Success in life mostly depends on the power of concentration. Clear thinking and intellectual understanding are very easy for a concentrated mind. Arjuna could shoot at the target with his tremendous power of concentration.

-Swami Vivekanand.

SWAMI VIVEKANAND - A REALIST

- Mallikarjun Uppar

Gurudeo R. D. Ranade was of the opinion that mystical experience and quality of heart correspond with each other. It is only the acquisition of spiritual experience which makes a man worthy of being the handiwork of God. We must first experience spiritual illumination (Realisation of God) and then perform our actions. That is the real offering of our actions to the Lord. The above elixir could be observed in Swami Vivekanand. It confirms that by his meditation and with the grace of his Guru Sri Ramakrishna, he could get spiritual experiences and gain courage and dedicate himself for service to the cause of Nation at large and perform his actions in that direction.

Sri R. D. Ranade says that the eventual consumation of the cosmic process is the fashioning out of a perfect society which would rest on the bedrock of morality and inward purity. Since time immemorial the one great ambition of all humanity has been the establishment of the ideal society. Sri swami Vivekanand too tried to establish such an Ideal society by advising the men to meditate and cultivate moral outlook.

According to Gurudeo Ranade meditation is the only path that can enable the Sadhaka to attain God-head. This path alone can take Sadhaka into inner sanctuary and grant him the vision and bliss of divinity. There is no other path for going there. All the saints of the world have followed the same pathway and have bequethed its knowledge to posterity. Swami Vivekanand

also followed the same path of meditation, experienced the vision and bliss and has bequethed its knowledge to posterity.

Gurudeo Ranade says and believed that Sri. Nimbargi Maharaj alias Sri. Gurulinga Jangam Maharaj, his Sadguru's Sadguru, was an ornament to spiritual life. He was one of the greatest saints of the modern India, nay of the whole world. Ranade described him using the words of Swami Vivekanand: "The greatest of men in the world have passed away unknown. The Buddhas and Christs, whom we know, are but second rate heroes, in comparison with greatest men of whom the world knows nothing. Silently they live and silenly they pass away; and in time, their thoughts find expression in Buddhas and Christs and it is these latter that become known to us." (On Freedom).

Sri Gurudeo R. D. Ranade prefered to speak through others. A mystic's words can perhaps be better understood only by a Mystic. Gurudeo Ranade being as a mystic as well as a philosopher, he could easily grasp the words of Swami Vivekananda and find them appropriate to describe the character of Nimbargi Maharaj.

It was Gurudeo's firm belief that there was true paramartha in Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekanand. Swami Vivekanand had deep faith in his Guru. Their relation resembles the characteristics of an ideal disciple enshrined by Gurudeo Ranade in one of his monumental works, 'The Pathway to God in Kannada Literature'. Swami Vivekanand imbibed these qualities. They are as follows:

1. Swami Vivekanand has been described as born upon earth like faith incarnate and as resplendent penance. He kept indelible and implicit faith on Sri. Ramakrishna and in the effacacy of Divine Name.
2. He is absolutely oblivious and unmindful of his own great-

ness. And his main vocation was to sing the glory of his Master.

3. He became a flute in the hands of his Master and acted reflexly or automatically and did whatever the teacher and holy mother Sri. Sharadadevi directed to him to do.

4. He milks the Kamadhenu, the wishfulfilling cow and distributes the milk to the society and to the world.

5. He is purer than camphor. He is immortal. He lives and makes his teacher Sri. Ramakrishna immortal. He was a real spiritual disciple and never exhausts himself. He immortalised both himself and his teacher. In short he adopted the attitudes that of a mystical devotee.

Swami Vivekanand sanctified his life by the grace of Ramakrishna Paramhansa and his life has become an emulative one.

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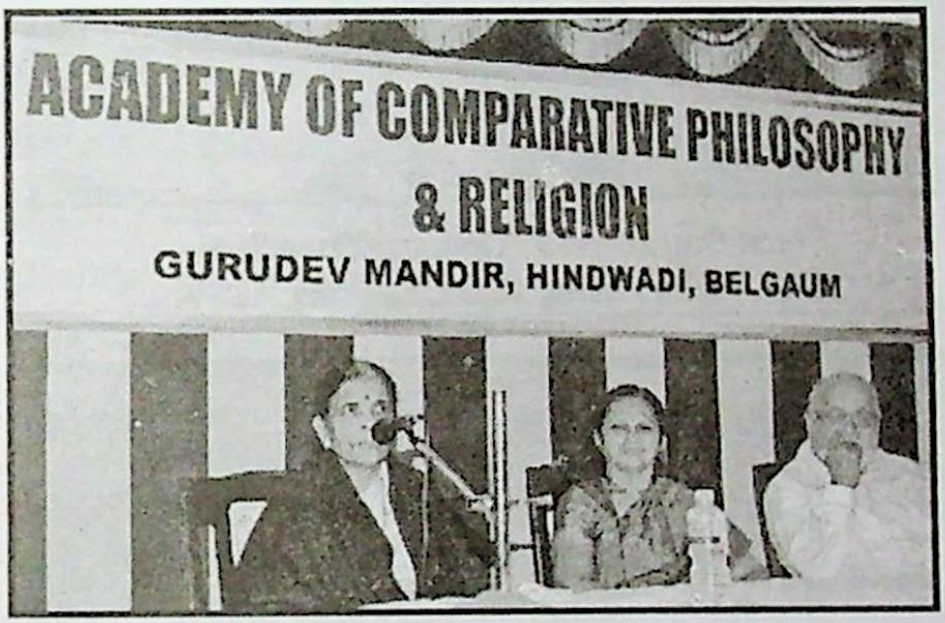
■

A full-fledged life of mysticism reconciles alike the claims of intellect, emotion and action. It would be wrong to say that mere intellect, or mere emotion or mere action leads to the realisation of the suprme ideal... One or the other may be stressed, no doubt, but all must be present in a greater or lesser degree, to enable one to attain to that Divine Bliss.

- Gurudeo Ranade,
in Vedanta as Culmination of Indian Thought, p. 162.

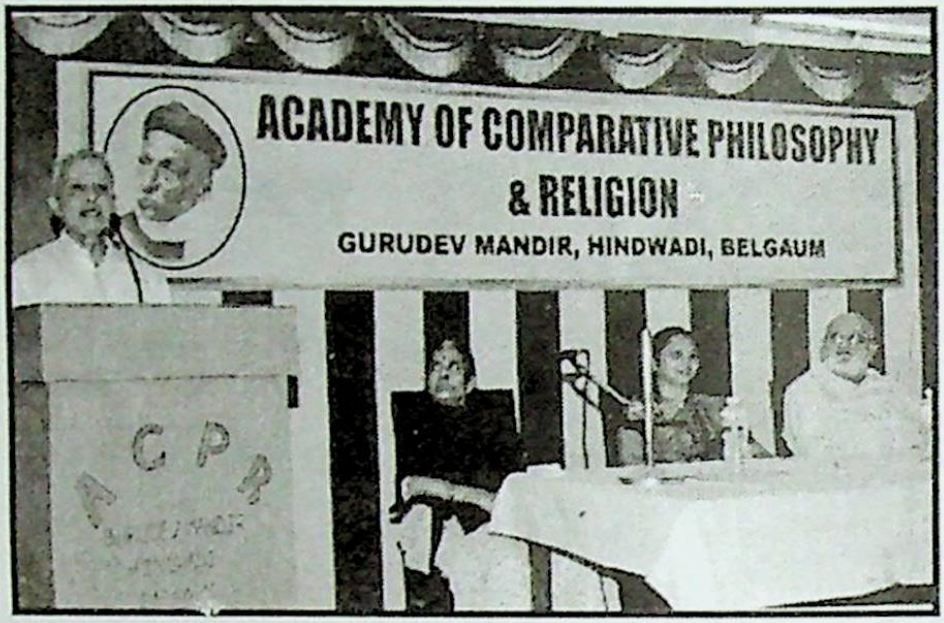
Activities of A. C. P. R.

Period from : 1st January to 31st March 2013

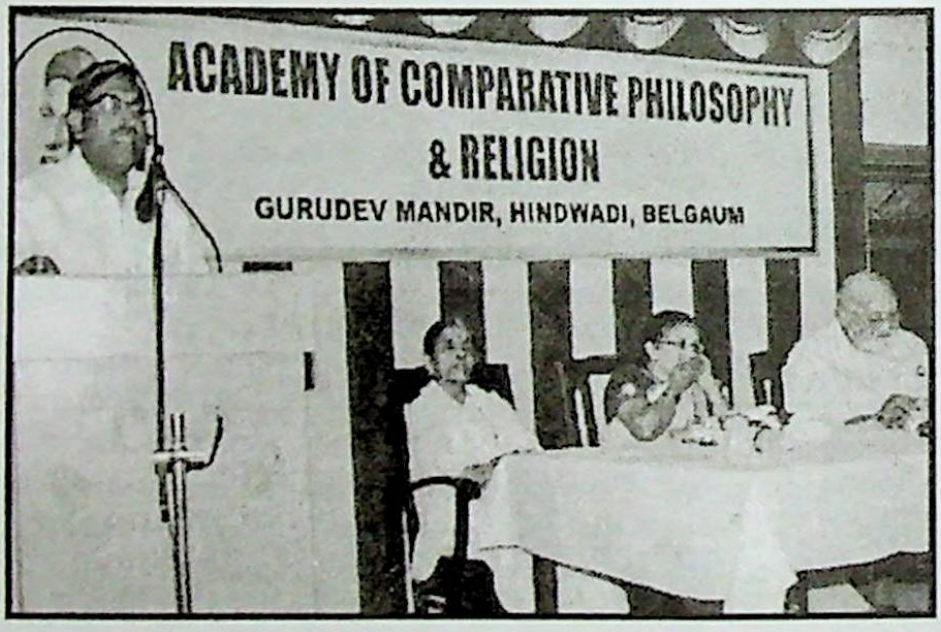


Smt. Vijayalaxmi Shirgaonkar Speaking
Center : Smt. Chanchalatai Punekar

On the occasion of Punyatithi of Sadguru Samarth Sri. Bhausaheb Maharaj, Umadikar, A. C. P. R. conducted Pravachan Malika on 26, 27 & 28 January 2013 in the evening 6-00 to 7-00 p.m. at A. C. P. R. Auditorium. The Topic was "Guru Mahima". Sou. Vijayalaxmi B. Shirgaonkar from Pune was the Pravachankar. The function was inaugurated by famous Pravachankar Sou. Chachalatai S. Punekar of Belgaum. Valedictory Address was given by Sou. Aruna Naik, Retd. Principal, R.P.D. College, Belgaum.



First Day 26-1-13 : Opening Speach by
Shri Ashok Potdar, Vice Chairman, ACPR



Last Day 28-1-13 : Conclusion Speach by
Shri M. B. Zirali, Secretary, ACPR

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31-3-2013. Secretary, A. C. P. R.

■

ATTENTION READERS :

SPECIAL ISSUE OF PATHWAY TO GOD -

ON THE SAINT OF UMADI :

On the eve of Death Centenary of Sadguru Bhausaheb Maharaj of Umadi, falling on 29th January, 2014, A.C.P.R. (Gurudeo Mandir) Hindwadi, Belgaum resolved to bring Special Issue relating to life of **Sadguru Bhausaheb Maharaj of Umadi.**

You are requested to send article/s, experience/s, memories relating to Sadguru Bhausaheb Maharaj of Umadi,in brief, clearly written /computerized in duly stamped envelope for publication in the Special Issue addressing to : The Manager, Academy of Comparative Philosophy & Religion (Gurudeo Mandir) Hindwadi - Belgaum, as early as possible.

On receipt of such articles at the office of A.C.P.R. Belgaum, on scrutiny, if they are found worth to be published in the Special Issue, same shall be published.

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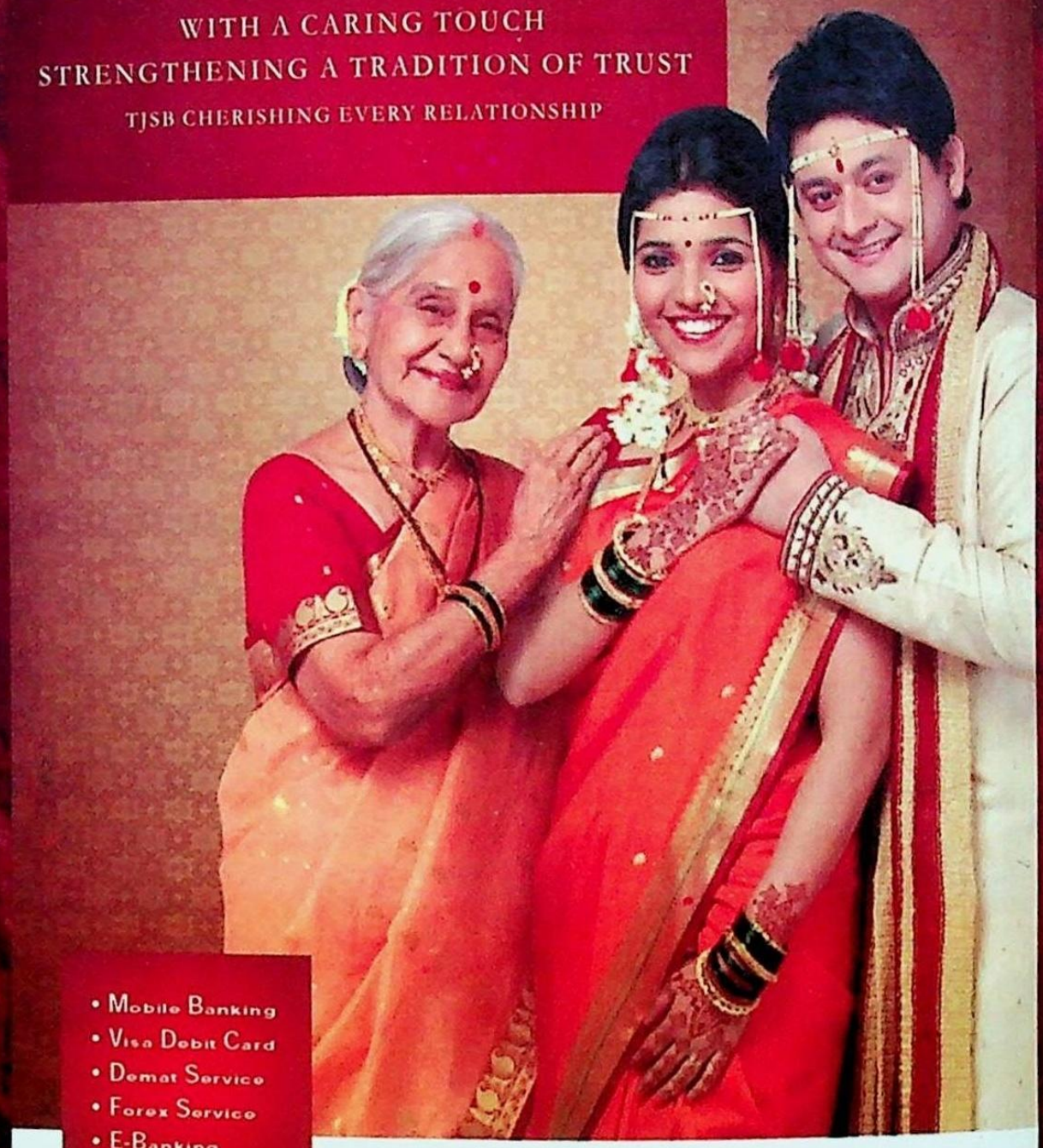

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